

## Education Sector Programs in Developing Countries



Tuomas Takala (ed.)

Education Sector Programs in Developing Countries  
Socio-political and Cultural Perspectives



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Cover design

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Cover photo

Matti Kuosmanen: Children in Nepal

Layout

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ISBN 978-951-44-7155-1

ISBN 978-951-44-7223-7 (pdf)

Tampereen Yliopistopaino Oy – Juvenes Print

Tampere 2007

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Tuomas Takala

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the research project

This book is the main outcome of the research project “Partnerships, Effectiveness and Impact in Education Sector Programs” (project nr. 210430), funded by the Academy of Finland during 2005–2007. The idea of the project grew from our interest towards two major trends observable in international analyses and practices of development cooperation, which are also reflected in Finland’s development cooperation. The first trend is the gradually increased attention that has been given to partnership at the level of intercultural learning and communication (e.g. *Culture in Finnish Development Cooperation* 1998). This trend manifests a growing concern, in an environment of development cooperation projects, over the efficiency and effectiveness of project-type interventions in contributing to development objectives. Studies dealing with the above issues have particularly focused on the role of technical cooperation personnel in a project environment, and on factors that facilitate or hinder building of local institutional capacity together with the local counterpart personnel (Leach 1993; Kealey & Protheroe 1996). The weight given to such themes reflects recognition of the attitudinal and communicational aspects of effectiveness, as well as the importance of ethics in development cooperation relationships (Evaluation of Finnish Education Sector Development Cooperation 2004, 16). The TILDA-project (Transformative intercultural learning in development cooperation), funded by the Academy of Finland during 2001–2004 and led by Rauni Räsänen at the University of Oulu, had intercultural competences and intercultural learning as its central themes (see Räsänen & San 2005) and contributed to the design of the research project reported here.

A second trend, of a more recent origin, is the gradual shift from the project mode towards sectoral development programs that has taken place particularly in the education and health sectors from the mid-1990s onwards (e.g. Gould & Takala & Nokkala 1998). Traditionally, donor agencies have provided project-based support to development. Over time, the project approach has come under growing criticism and self-criticism for being parallel with the operation of developing country governments and eroding the capacity of the latter. Poor sustainability of projects' results is also a recurrent finding of evaluations. Admitting the weaknesses of the project mode, donors have collectively adopted the **Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp)** to development from the mid-1990s onwards. An often-quoted definition characterizes SWAp as follows: "...all significant funding for the sector supports a single sector policy and expenditure program, under Government leadership, adopting common approaches across the sector, and progressing towards relying on Government procedures to disburse and account for all funds" (Foster 2000, 9). Earlier comparative and case studies of the context and the preparation processes of Education Sector Development Programs in different countries (Takala 1998; Gould & Takala & Nokkala op.cit.; Martin & Oksanen & Takala 2000; Buchert 2002; Takala & Marope 2003) were another basis for the design of the research project reported in this book.

The evolving new mode of development cooperation – support to sector development programs – is intended to bring about national ownership of these programs and coherence among the different actors within them. Paradoxically, however, aid-dependence has been a catalyzing factor in those developing countries that have devised and adopted sector programs. Lavergne (2004) refers to different degrees of aid-dependence as an explanation to the fact that SWAp is much more commonly adopted in Africa and the aid-dependent Asian countries such as Vietnam and Bangladesh than in most of Latin America or in large Asian countries such as China and India. Consenting to SWAp has enabled countries to gain access to debt relief, increased grant funding and preferential credit arrangements from donor agencies. By contrast, less aid-dependent countries have more autonomy to assert their own policy choices

in the design of national sector programs and hence may be more inclined to pursue the project approach as a complement to their own programs.

The themes of partnership, intercultural learning and communication have remained very relevant also in the changing landscape of development cooperation, where sector program support requires new forms of partnership between the funding agencies and the host country's personnel and sets new demands for the competences of those involved in development cooperation on both sides. On another intercultural dimension, wider and more intensive cooperation is required among the community of external funding agencies, both at headquarters and in-country level. The new requirements are for a different kind of analytical, negotiation and coordination skills than those needed in projects (Riddell 2001; Eriksson Baaz 2002).

There is an accumulating body of analyses of the sector program mode in general, and of **Education Sector Development Programs (ESDPs)** more specifically (for overviews, see Appadu & Frederic 2003 and UNESCO 2006). However, the existing analyses typically focus on short-to-medium term practical concerns and hereby do not give much attention to the wider socio-political context in which ESDPs are negotiated, planned and implemented. In recent years, the new focus of several analyses on the links between the ESDPs and the national **Poverty Reduction Strategic Plans (PRSPs)** has to some extent led to increased awareness of this wider context, but there is still a tendency to sideline issues that are not directly relevant to the practical questions of alignment between ESDPs and PRSPs. Furthermore, as most of the studies on ESDPs have been carried out as commissioned consultancy work, they are rarely based on any systematic data collection. A related typical feature of such studies is the absence of the voices of stakeholders, particularly those from the South.

Notwithstanding the premium placed on national ownership of ESDPs, the negotiation and design of these programs is strongly conditioned by technical-economic rationality, concerned with the effectiveness and impact of these programs. This is evident e.g. in the preparation of Medium Term Expenditure Frameworks, which define the volume of public expenditure for

each sector and are related to conditions attached to financial support from donor agencies. For countries participating in the Education for All Fast-Track Initiative, technical-economic rationality has recently become tangible in the “indicative framework” which defines target parameters for resource allocation and cost-efficiency in the education sector. Another example are the assessments of the (expected and ex-post facto) impact of ESDPs on poverty reduction that follow from the requirement that sector development programs be aligned with the PRSPs (e.g. Foster & Mackintosh-Walker 2001). In the development cooperation relationship, external funding agencies, in particular the World Bank, are the prime proponents of technical-economic rationality, whereas local technocratic elites of developing countries can often be seen to act in alliance with the external agencies (Gould & Ojanen 2003). By contrast, both the local and expatriate education professionals who participate in the preparation of ESDPs are not necessarily very competent to relate their planning work to the macro-level parameters, and may even be unaware of the latter.

As Seppälä (2000, 188) has pointed out, the technocratic approach which has been predominant in the design of sector programs is problematic in that it sidelines the institutions and processes of political democracy – which again contradicts the emphasis otherwise given in development cooperation to the importance of promoting representative democracy as a fundamental precondition of development. On the other hand, the required national ownership of and long-term commitment to the ESDPs are vulnerable to the inherent unpredictability of national politics, which is due to inter-party competition in electoral campaigns, changes of Ministers or entire Cabinets, and to the legislative and budgetary powers of Parliaments.

The mainstream thinking about sector programs is also very unclear about the possible and preferable roles of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the sector program context, and the variety of NGOs in this respect is seldom acknowledged (Seppälä op.cit., 171). At the same time, there is also evidence that education projects supported by NGOs may operate detached from the larger ESDP and PRSP context, and an atmosphere of mutual suspicion

between NGOs and Government may prevail (Review ... 2003; Miller-Granvaux et al. 2002). “Consultation with representatives of civil society” is a requirement voiced by both external funding agencies and international and local NGOs in the preparation of ESDPs and PRSPs, in the name of increasing local ownership of these programs and ensuring that the interests of the poor be attended to. From this perspective, it is important to note the possibility of conflict between some interpretations of the above consultation requirement and the role of the established or incipient institutions of representative democracy (notably in legislation and approval of public sector budgets). In addition to the role of NGOs in the preparation of the ESDPs, their role in the implementation of these programs (in e.g. direct provision of education to particularly disadvantaged population groups) merits further analysis.

## Research questions and implementation of the project

The overarching research question in the project plan was formulated as follows: What promotes partnerships, effectiveness and impact in education sector development programs? More specifically, the plan contained the following questions:

- 1) How can partnerships, intercultural learning and communication be strengthened in education sector development cooperation?
- 2) What is the role of democratic vs. technocratic decision-making on the various fora of education policy-making in the context of education sector development programs (ESDPs)?,
- 3) What is the relationship between the poverty reduction objective and other main objectives of ESDPs, and how can the contribution of education to poverty reduction be assessed in the context of an ESDP?,
- 4) What is the role of NGOs in the preparation and implementation of ESDPs, and how is this role linked to the poverty reduction objective and to institutions of representative democratic participation?

Due to unanticipated change in the contributions of individual members of the initial project group, research question nr. 3 had to be dropped and, consequently, the “Impact”-part of the original title of the project was substantially weakened.

The project group has consisted of Professor Tuomas Takala (Department of Education, University of Tampere) as leader, Professor Rauni Räsänen (Department of Teacher Education, University of Oulu), Dr. Mojibur Doftori as post-doctoral researcher, and two doctoral students, Hanna Alasuutari (University of Oulu) and Petra Packalen (University of Tampere).

The choice of countries on which our data collection and analysis has focused was determined, first, by the team members’ previous familiarity with the respective societies, education policies and related development cooperation. The cases (Nepal, Tanzania and Zambia) are also countries where Finland is a contributor to ongoing ESDPs.

All the articles in this book are based on qualitative content analysis of written documents (from governments, funding agencies and NGOs) and are also informed by professional experience of the authors with the education sector in the countries concerned. In addition, two of the articles rely on interview data, which enables us to give voice to views of stakeholders. Alasuutari & Räsänen report findings from 19 in-depth interviews of Zambian and European professionals who work in tasks related to development cooperation in the education sector. These interviews were conducted in Zambia over a period of several years and are complemented by field notes. The study by Takala & Doftori undertook a total of 49 interviews with key informants (Ministry of Education officials, representatives of external funding agencies and international and local NGOs), in three intensive rounds in Nepal and Tanzania. A deviation from the initially planned data collection is that interviews in Tanzania concerning research question nr. 2 had to be postponed beyond the project period.

## Content of the book

The article by **Petra Packalen** examines issues of technocratic rationality, global agenda, national politics and the role of parliament in the making of education policy in the sector program context, first at the general level and then in the specific situation of Tanzania.

The shift from projects to sector program support and the consequent requirement to ensure coherence both within the education sector and with broader economic and social development frameworks has led to increased attention from the donor agencies to the making of education policies in developing countries. This change challenges the partner governments' ability to maintain their leadership in the definition of options and priorities for the national education policy. In the complex setting of broad and long-term development frameworks and sector program support, policy making is increasingly restricted to those who have high-level technical knowledge and skills and whose decisions are relatively unconstrained by political processes. While promotion of democracy is among the supreme goals of development cooperation, the technocratic styles of policymaking distort the structures of accountability in the recipient countries.

The trend towards depolitisation is also related to the fact that one of the central features of SWAp is the expected multi-year commitment to the sector program on the part of both the national government and the external funding agencies. If a country is formally committed to a multi-year sector development program negotiated with – and often to a great extent formulated by – the external funding agencies and their consultants, the space for shaping and reshaping national education policies through political debates is inevitably reduced.

A notable feature of SWAp has been the marginal role of democratic institutions, especially parliaments. In the sector program context, other forms of participation have been emphasised at the cost of representative democratic structures. Donor agencies have been criticised for not fully understanding the role of parliaments in the development of democracy in the South, as they have

tended to work mainly with the executive and the civil society organizations. The consequent risk is not only that the potential of parliamentary involvement in policy-making is neglected, but also that the long-term institutional development of parliamentary democracies is undermined, even if this is one the central aims of development cooperation.

The evidence gathered from analysis of policy documents in Tanzania suggests that the degree of external influence on the formulation of the official policy agenda is considerable, in spite of the widespread rhetoric of ownership. On the other hand, the possibilities of the global agenda to replace national politics in the making of education policy should not be exaggerated. Clearly, the influence of technocratic rationality has its limitations in practice. Even in a situation where the formulation of the official policy is a reflection of technocratic rationality, there is still room for the domestic political considerations to influence actual implementation of stated policy.

In their contribution, **Tuomas Takala** and **Mojibur Doftori** take as their starting point the fact that the ongoing change in development cooperation from the project mode towards sector program support challenges the role of NGOs that are active in the education sector. In many developing countries, including several which are far from achieving the EFA goal, projects operated by NGOs have come to play a prominent role in the provision of basic education to disadvantaged population groups. Such NGOs are typically very dependent on direct external funding and poorly coordinated with each other. In the context of ESDPs, the involvement of NGOs and their direct funding from donor agencies are challenged by the requirement that NGO activities should be justified by their expected contribution to the sector program and, to the extent that they are regarded as justified, should be aligned with the sector program.

Parallel to the NGOs' role in service provision, they have increasingly come to be regarded as significant actors in policy advocacy and dialogue, often with the expectation from the donor side that NGOs serve as "watchdogs" to sector program planning and implementation, give voice to disadvantaged population groups and thus contribute to the building of civil society. This is



in stark contrast with the negligible role of institutions of formal representative democracy in the design and monitoring of ESDPs.

The findings of the study indicate that during the existence of the ESDPs in both Nepal and Tanzania the activities of NGOs have overall become somewhat better coordinated with each other and with the national education sector programs. In both countries the advocacy role of educational NGOs is on the rise, and its concrete shape is influenced by the attitude of Government, the expectations of donor agencies and the capacities of individual NGOs. In Nepal, the long-time experience of many NGOs in provision of non-formal basic education gives credibility to their role as partners in policy discussions, but this role is confounded by links of many NGOs with political parties. In Tanzania, NGOs have entered the arena of education policy making without a background in service provision and in a more controversial manner. At the same time, there is criticism towards Nepalese NGOs becoming sub-contractors to the ESDP, thereby risking their capacity to remain innovative and outspoken in policy issues. In both countries, there are also questions concerning the accountability of NGOs vis-à-vis their ostensible constituencies and their external sources of funding.

The article by **Hanna Alasuutari** and **Rauni Räsänen** reports the findings of the project concerning our research question nr. 1. It discusses the terms “partnership” and “ownership” in development cooperation particularly from the perspective of intercultural encounters and asks, whether, and how, the meaning of these concepts has changed in the transition from the project mode towards sector program support in the education sector in Zambia. The data of this study demonstrates how the actors at grassroots level are confronted by these changes. While this study considers changes in partnership and ownership in the Zambian education sector in general, part of the data has been collected from people who have worked in the area of special and inclusive education.

As a whole, the informants in this study described many changes which indicated that SWAp has increased Zambian ownership of the development of the education sector. It had become easier than before for the host country's

ministry to decide about what to do with the available resources and to be better prepared for the joint meetings with the representatives of donor agencies. Some of the interviewees pointed out that the situation is complicated and one could see a dual ownership: of the Ministry of Education, on the one hand, and of donor agencies, on the other. Previous analyses of the sector-wide approach have pointed out that in SWAp, a distinction can be made between two levels of partnership: 1) partnership among different donors and 2) partnership between the agencies and the Ministry of Education (e.g. Takala & Marope op.cit., p. 27–28). However, in the education sector of Zambia, the individual relationships between the Ministry of Education and each donor constitute a third level of partnership that during the time of our data collection still existed as a legacy from the era of projects.

The ongoing harmonisation of development cooperation procedures in Zambia is an attempt to look at matters from the perspective of the host country and to agree on the division of labour among donor agencies. This has challenged the traditional roles of donors and the Ministry and new forms of cooperation need to be developed. Several interviewees emphasised the danger of discussions focusing too much on administrative matters and too little attention being given to the substance of education itself. According to the results of this study, development cooperation workers regard knowledge about culture, intercultural sensitivity and capacity to learn as key conditions for more authentic partnership and ownership. Other factors like personality and attitudes are also considered important for successful working relations.

The **concluding chapter** highlights the main findings of our research project, and briefly discusses their implications for the practice of development cooperation, as well as questions arising from our research that would merit further study.

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Petra Packalen

# TECHNOCRATIC RATIONALITY, GLOBAL AGENDA AND THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY IN THE MAKING OF EDUCATION POLICY IN THE SECTOR PROGRAM CONTEXT, WITH PARTICULAR FOCUS ON TANZANIA

## Introduction

This article examines issues of technocratic rationality, global agenda, national politics and the role of parliament in the making of education policy in the sector program context.<sup>1</sup> The original intention was that this contribution to the research project would also be based on interviews and these were to be carried out in Tanzania in early 2007. However the birth of my daughter in the spring of 2007 prevented the planned fieldtrip. Therefore, instead of new data collected among the sector program stakeholders in Tanzania, this article is mainly based on a review of existing literature and to some extent also on analysis of policy documents.

The article consists of two parts. The first part deals with the general problematics of policy making in the sector program context. The second part illustrates these issues further by looking into the specific situation of one country, Tanzania. Similarly, the issues presented in the first part help to put the developments in Tanzania into a wider context.

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<sup>1</sup> These themes will be further elaborated in my doctoral research. The overall aim of my PhD research is to investigate the reality of educational policy-making in a sector program context, with specific reference to the situation in Tanzania. The main focus will be on looking at how the education policy agenda is formulated and reasoned.

The shift from projects to sector program support and the consequent requirement to ensure coherence both within the education sector and with broader economic and social development frameworks is changing the parameters and styles of governance in the recipient countries. This shift has led to increased attention of international development partners to the definition of national education policies. In many developing countries, the external donors have become active and influential actors in the design of educational policies and reform strategies. This development is challenging the recipient governments' ability to maintain their leadership in the definition of options and priorities for the national education policy. In the complex setting of broad and long-term development frameworks and program aid, policy making is increasingly restricted to those who have high-level technical knowledge and skills and whose decisions are unconstrained by political processes. While promotion of democracy is among the supreme goals of development cooperation, the technocratic styles of policymaking associated with development cooperation distort the structures of accountability in the recipient countries.

According to Gould and Ojanen (2003), the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) process in Tanzania is related to two parallel trends, namely depolitisation of governance and transnationalisation of political space. Also Hydén has argued that "Perhaps the most significant change in the Tanzanian power map in the past ten years is the extent to which the international community, through international finance institutions and donor agencies, has managed to get a hold on Tanzania's destiny". In this configuration, the donors are not only the undisputed agenda-setters but also involved in the implementation machinery through direct or indirect means. Even if the Government of Tanzania may "own" the development process, donors have come to determine its direction. (Hydén 2005, 16.)

The topic of this study is closely linked to the work of the author in the Finnish National Board of Education. Since the autumn 2002 my duties have included the follow-up of the education sector development program in Tanzania for the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. This experience

has been instructive in showing how the making of educational policy in the context of a sector program is to a great extent dominated by the discussion on aid modalities and by economic and technocratic criteria that have the appearance of being politically neutral. In my research I aim to better include the perspective and logic of national politics and educational policy-making in the aid-driven international discourse on education sector development programs.

Because of my professional position I have been involved – even if from a distance and to a small degree – in the education sector program dialogue in Tanzania. This role has provided access to documents, correspondence and discussions that have not all been open to a wider public. As my role in that context has been one of a civil servant and not of a researcher, it would be unethical to refer to any of the confidential information in my research. It is, however, inevitable that this personal experience affects my views and analysis.

## Conceptual framework

**Public policy**, as defined by Les Pal, is a course of action or inaction chosen by public authorities to address a given problem or interrelated set of problems. Policy may also be defined as any course of action – or inaction – relating to the selection of goals, the definition of values or the allocation of resources (e.g. Olssen et al. 2004, 71).

As regards **public policy making**, John W. Kingdon defines it to be a set of processes that include at least:

1. the setting of the agenda;
2. the specification of alternatives from which choice is to be made;
3. an authoritative choice among the specified alternatives through e.g. legislative vote or presidential decision;
4. the implementation of the decision.

**Agenda**, in this context, is a list of subjects or problems to which government (or actors closely associated with the government) is paying serious attention at any given time. With regard to the agenda it is relevant to ask: What makes people in and around the government attend to some subjects and not to others? How do issues come on the political agenda and why some likely alternatives never come to be the focus of serious attention? (Kingdon 1995, 1–3.)

The **policy process** can also be seen as consisting of the following five components:

1. Agenda setting: Awareness of and priority given to an issue or problem.
2. Policy formulation: How (analytical and political) options and strategies are constructed.
3. Decision making: The ways decisions are made about alternatives.
4. Policy implementation: The forms and nature of policy administration and activities on the ground.
5. Policy evaluation: The nature of monitoring and evaluation of policy need, design, implementation and impact. (Pollard & Court 2005, 2.)

Of the above five, the issues covered in this article concern particularly the first three components. In relation to the role of parliament in the sector program context, also the fifth component is relevant. Policy implementation is not within the scope of this article. Having said this, I acknowledge that policy is often made much more in practice than by pronouncement. Stated policy may be very different from policy in practice. (Samoff 1999b, 417.)

Another pertinent concept for this article is that of **policy context**. Policy is developed within a particular set of values, pressures, constraints and structural arrangements. It is a response to particular problems, needs and aspirations (Harman 1984, 17). The lack of contextualisation is one of the potential weaknesses in policy-making based on technocratic rationality.

A concept that relates to contextualisation is that of **policy transfer**. Educational transfer has become a useful alternative to the concept of educational borrowing, which has been a central topic in the field of



comparative education for a long time. Educational transfer can refer to borrowing, lending or imposing. Policy transfer can be defined as “the process by which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political system (past or present) is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political system” (Dolowitz & Marsh 2000, 5). A key question with regard the nature of policy transfer is whether it is voluntary or coercive. Direct coercive transfer where a country is forced to adopt a certain policy is rare. However, the influence that international funding agencies, the IMF and World Bank in particular, have in the form of their explicit or implicit conditionalities on the countries in need of external funding can be described as being coercive. (Ibid., 10–11.)

The concept of transfer refers to the process, but just as interesting is the content of what is transferred. There is an abundance of educational research on the emergence of a world model for educational development (e.g. Benavot; Crossley & Watson 2004; Dale 2000; Daun 2002; Fiala & Landford 1987; Green 1997; Meyer & Ramirez 2000). In this article, the term **global agenda** is used to refer to the model that is advocated by the international agencies and consists of advocating e.g. Education for All, life-long learning, quality education, input/output -efficiency, and school-based management. The global agenda consists of both tacit understandings and explicit recommendations, and its influence on educational policies is both direct and indirect (Daun 2002, 18–19). There are various traditions as to how to interpret the increasing convergence of education systems. It has been explained by consensus, conflict and cultural models. The first one emphasises the similarity of challenges that all countries face in the global economy. The conflict model seeks explanations in neo-colonialism and cultural imperialism, whereas the culturalist model draws attention to cultural pluralism and the persistence of diverse educational concerns of societies.

Another key concept in this article that is interconnected with the global agenda is **technocratic rationality**. I use the description that Morales-Gomez has given in describing the technocratic approach to educational planning. Two

assumptions have been central to this approach. The first one is that educational planning is a non-ideological technique, based on scientific principles that are neutral and independent from the political and economic contradictions in society. The second assumption implies that planning is not affected by the relations of contradiction and correspondence that exist in the society, and that planners can function independently from the power structure to which they belong. (Morales-Gomez 1988, 21.)

Finally, a classical definition for the concept of **democracy** has been formulated by Samuel Huntington: a political system is democratic “to the extent that its most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote” (cited in Edigheji 2005, 3). There are, however, numerous competing conceptions of democracy among political theorists (e.g. Dahl 2000; Schumpeter 1950). Therefore it is not necessarily unambiguous what a donor agency means when it sets the promotion of democracy as a goal for its development policy.

## The global agenda of educational development

In the majority of developing countries, the thrust of educational development is spoken of under the global slogan of Education for All (EFA). There are, however, also critical voices referring to the paradox of EFA: donors are advocating an increasing diversity and decentralisation of the education system and the consequent increasing autonomy of local level and schools. At the same time, education policies have become more centralised on a global scale, with an increased influence of external agencies on the formulation of national policies (e.g. Volan 2003). The remarkable degree of consistency between education sector programs in different countries evokes the question whether development strategies are genuinely owned by Government or rather reflecting globally known policy positions of donor agencies. The challenge is thus how to design policies – under the influence of the global agenda – that

are responsive to the perceived context-specific needs and widely acceptable at national and even local level. If the global agenda is adopted without regard to national priorities of educational development, such policy is likely to appear as an imposition.

The policy positions that have been put forth by the global education agenda since the 1990s include e.g.

- high priority for primary education, implying lower priority for post-primary sub-sectors;
- priority for formal education and low priority for non-formal education of youth and adults;
- focus on access to education by girls, rural and poor people;
- emphasis on general education and de-emphasising practical or vocational content;
- promotion of mother tongue instruction at lower primary levels while also recognising the political and economic difficulties related to the issue. (Takala & Tapaninen 1998; Sogge 1999; Chabbot 2003, 38–39.)

Two prominent sources for the global agenda on education have been the World Bank (WB) and the EFA process.

The WB Education Sector Strategy of 1999 has had a profound impact on governments. This document has a strong focus on primary education, which has also affected the financial allocations within the education sector. The strategy also proposes cost-recovery and privatization in secondary and tertiary education and means for school improvement which have been deduced from results of input/output-studies.

The criticisms towards the WB policy are numerous and concentrate particularly on the following areas. Firstly the WB is seen to have an over-emphasis on primary education at the expense of other levels of education. Secondly, the WB is criticised for offering solely Western solutions, such as school choice, concepts of decentralisation and school management, outcomes-based learning and curriculum. It is also accused for relying too strongly on

human capital theory and valuing education in so far as it serves the global economy. Educational processes and outcomes are judged and measured in terms of costs and returns to investment at the expense of more humanistic and value-oriented criteria, such as self-reliance, national unity, obligations of citizenship etc. Educational quality has been measured in terms of inputs and outputs, which has narrowed the approach to quality improvement. Finally, there is a contradiction in the way the WB recognises uniqueness of each country and yet recommends global strategies. (Crossley & Watson 2004, 111; Daun 2002, 251; Samoff 1999a, 68–69; Takala 2001, 46; Tikly 2004, 189–190.)

King sees the Jomtien World Conference on Education for All in 1990 as unique in proposing an educational vision and agenda for the world – including the industrialised world. But the attempt to formulate a single education agenda for the whole world was not realistic. The original Education for All (EFA) agenda was soon narrowed to Schooling for All (SFA), which can be seen as one of the first steps in the donor determination of the global education agenda (King 2004, 86–87). By the mid-1990s, the global agenda on education had further narrowed within the framework of the international development targets of the OECD/DAC (Development Assistance Committee). The focus was now on two goals: reaching universal primary education by 2015 and elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005. This modified agenda was re-endorsed by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (*ibid.*, 88). When the simplified target-setting of the MDGs is compared with the width and complexity of the portfolios of national ministries, it would be only natural if many countries identified the MDGs as the donors' agenda rather than their own. King points out that no Minister of Education can expect to survive if his or her only objective is primary education and gender equity in basic education by 2015 and 2005 respectively. Thus it would be logical to assume that MDGs are not in fact widely owned in the South, except when it is expedient to promote free primary education also from the point of view of domestic politics. (*Ibid.*, 91–92.)

## Depolitisation of and technocratic rationality in education policy

The term “depolitisation” here refers to the lack of meaningful political debate in the educational planning and decision-making. This term is also linked to the question “who participates in the decision-making?” as well as to the above-mentioned globalisation of educational agenda. Furthermore, depolitisation is related to the sector-wide approach (SWAp) because one of central features of SWAp is the multi-year commitment to the sector program on the part of both the national government and the external funding agencies. If a country is formally committed to the EFA target and MDGs, as well as to a multi-year sector development plan negotiated with – and often to a great extent formulated by – the external funding agencies and consultants, the space for shaping and reshaping national education policies through political debates is inevitably reduced.

In March 2005, over one hundred signatories representing donor and developing countries and aid organisations endorsed the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness. With its five principles – ownership, alignment, harmonisation, managing for results, and mutual accountability – the declaration aims to significantly increase the impact of aid. Lavergne and Wood provide a more critical view on the agreement:

*A remarkable feature of the Paris Declaration is the implicit assumption of a national consensus on a country's needs and priorities. The sense that one gets from the Paris Declaration is that local ownership is defined by the existence of a single national development strategy owned by the central government, and that this is the only legitimate expression of country needs. Only in limited ways is there any sense of political debate. (Lavergne & Wood 2006, 19.)*

The Paris Declaration is just one example of the unresolved tension between the wish to endorse nationally owned long-term strategies and to respect the priorities of newly elected governments. Particularly in the case of Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS), donors tend to have a technocratic view that PRS is seen as a policy commitment that should be binding on one government after the next, on the grounds that it constitutes a technically sound strategy to

address issues of poverty reduction and growth, which ought to be politically salient for any government. (Piron & Evans 2004, 14.) Poverty reduction has become the invincible rhetorical device in the development cooperation. Who would not be in favour of effective poverty reduction! The rhetoric about reaching and benefiting the poor hides away the inherent ideological tensions that are embedded in any public reform.

One contributing factor to the lack of political debate is the schedule of reforms. Donor agencies, due to their accountability to their own constituencies, have often been in a hurry to press Governments of the South to agree on policy positions and to demonstrate short-term progress. This does not allow sufficient time for national political process of reflection and consensus building (Brown et al. 2001, 12). Disconnecting development programs from national politics may also be more deliberate. Creating policy space would enable governments to introduce policies that donors may not welcome (Joint Evaluation of General Budget Support 2006).

Sogge (1999) has argued that donors tend to rely on local policy technocrats who are more likely to be aligned with donor agendas than with national political systems. The new policy elite is characterised by its dissociation from political processes, including those of representative democracy. Especially donors avoid the appearance of engaging in politics and tend to use a vocabulary free from social interests or demands. (Gould & Ojanen 2003.)

And yet: *“Effective and appropriate public policy cannot ignore interests, preferences and politics. — — Making policy is after all not an antiseptic, sheltered, apolitical process. Successfully implemented policies must confront and engage, not avoid, the conflict of interests and the tensions among the organization of production, the structure of power and patterns of social differentiation.”* (Samoff 1999a, 79.)

Policy is clearly a matter of the authoritative allocation of values. Answering questions such as ‘What should be included in the reform?’, ‘Whose interests the reform should be based on?’, ‘What kind of structures, contents and strategies will best serve the purpose?’ means making political and ideological choices in a specific historical, economic, social and cultural context. The state

represents unevenly the different groups in society which makes state policy inevitably ideological by its nature and in its effects. (Olssen et al. 2004, 71.) Moreover, a reform often comes with a change in the balance of power, e.g. Ministry of Education losing power to other branches of administration or to local decision makers and has therefore a political price. (Moura Castro 2002, 396.)

The political nature of development is at least partly recognised in the World Bank's World Development Report 2004: *"Public resources are politically distributed, so the effective distribution of resources is an issue of voice."* *"Changing – – – distribution of resources requires more than a technocratic adjustment...."* *"Politics play a key role in establishing objectives for the education system – concerning both distribution and quality..."* (World Bank 2003, 114–116.) In practice, however, the development industry is making far-reaching political solutions – affecting the livelihoods of millions of people – via technocratic measures.

The global agenda on education can be seen as a reflection of this technocratic rationality. Policy recommendations make often reference to research or "lessons learned". The latter implies that certain ways of doing things, derived from experience, produce better results (Chabbot 2003, 156–158; Samoff 1999, 75). Evidence-based policy is by no means limited to the development context. On the contrary, it is an area of increasing interest in the OECD countries. The problem in the context of developing countries is that the research is combined with development assistance, which makes it more difficult to reject the recommendations arising from research. Samoff has described research as currency or ammunition of development planners. He argues that development-related research is not always relevant but is often instrumental or even mere justification. (Samoff 1999a, 78–79.) Debate about policy alternatives is difficult when the agenda is embedded in ostensibly apolitical and neutral research. How are ordinary citizens, teachers or even members of parliament to challenge the presumed universalism of research on e.g. human capital theory or rate of return?! (Samoff 1999a, 82–83).

Notwithstanding the valuable contributions that research can make to policy making (e.g. evidence about the benefits of using the mother tongue in education), the application of scientific knowledge, views and norms, particularly as these are developed in the North, can also become part of the educational problem in the South, instead of providing a solution to it. The outcome may be a standardised policy that relies on Western research methods but misses the link to local context and everyday knowledge of people on the ground (Buchert 1998, 21). Many experts, though sensitive to the importance of tailoring development models to local conditions, nonetheless, proceed in their work as though, at some level, development can be a scientific, apolitical, acultural undertaking. (Chabbot 2003, 13.)

## Role of parliament in the sector program context

A notable feature of SWAp has been the marginal role of democratic institutions, especially parliaments. Parliament is not the only forum for democratic participation. Parliament is, however, a key institution in a democracy and in its capacity as legislative authority could be in a central position in decision-making concerning e.g. national education policies. In practice, the situation often looks very different. In the sector program context, other forms of participation have been emphasised at the cost of representative democratic structures. Donor agencies have been criticised for not fully understanding the role of parliaments in the development of democracy in the South, as they have tended to work mainly with the executive and the civil society organisations. (Hudson & Wren 2007) The parliament may simply have been forgotten or referred to as a pressure group by donors, instead of seeing it as a “society’s democratic forum for the reconciliation of interests” (Eberlei 2002, 30). The technocratic rationality and current forms of sector program support emphasise consensus, whereas debates and differences of opinion together with tolerance of pluralism and dissent form an essential part of a democracy. (Doherty 2001; Piron & Evans 2004.)



The term participation has in many occasions been used to refer exclusively to the “participation of civil society” – though without any precise definition for the latter. Support to civil society groups instead of parliament may seem as a means of apolitical involvement from the outside, but also civil society groups grapple with intrinsically political issues. (Doherty 2001, 25–26; Piron & Evans 2004, 18.) NGO’s have been criticised for being substituted for people’s participation and acting as gatekeepers for other forms of democratic representation. Concepts such as ‘fast-track democracy’, ‘event culture’ and ‘workshopping mode of consultation’ have been used to characterize the tendency to ad hoc, non-institutionalised consultation. (Eberlei 2002; Edigheji 2005; Gould & Ojanen 2003) Members of parliaments have themselves expressed a concern that the donor emphasis on civil society is undermining the legitimacy of elected representatives. They also question the legitimacy of NGOs to represent the voice of “the people”. (World Bank 2003, 210.) There have been concerns about whether externally funded NGOs represent national agendas and interests or rather those of their international sponsors. (Oxhorn 2007, 3.) (For similar criticisms voiced in Nepal and Tanzania, see the article of Takala & Dofitori in this book, pp. 78, 89–90, 94–95.)

The consequent risk is not only that the potential of parliamentary involvement in policy-making is neglected, but also that the long-term institutional development of parliamentary democracies is undermined, even if this is one of the fundamental aims of development cooperation. The technocratic style of policy-making and reliance on ad hoc consultations with “civil society” pose a threat to democracy, because decisions are not subjected to the public scrutiny and dynamics of bargaining that are at the heart of democratic politics. The structures of accountability are distorted if governments become more answerable to external funding agencies than to representative institutions and the national public at large. The situation may also weaken public confidence in the democratic process if the citizens’ votes are irrelevant in decisions that affect their lives. (Bangura 2004; Eberlei & Henn 2003.)

While in a democracy parliaments are the legitimate representatives of the people, in many of the Sub-Saharan countries they lack both legitimacy and effectiveness. This has been used as an argument to ignore the parliaments in the context of development cooperation. However, democracy should be seen as a process and not as a dichotomy, either present or not. While it has already been widely recognised that African parliaments have not been adequately supported in capacity building, the shortcoming has still not been corrected. (Carothers 2007; Eberlei & Henn 2003.) Also in Tanzania, there have been various initiatives to strengthen the capacity of the Members of Parliament and the parliamentary committees but the degree of attention given to the parliament simply does not correspond to its importance. (Lawson et al. 2005, 94.)

Until recently, policy documents and evaluation reports related to development cooperation have usually paid very little, if any, attention to the role of democratically elected bodies. Compared to the number of references made to NGOs, the interest in the role of parliaments and other agents of political society was for a long time almost non-existent. This is now beginning to change. (Hudson & Wren 2007.) A review of a small random sample of aid policy papers published since 2000 confirms that parliaments – except parliaments of the donor countries as bodies to which the funding agencies are accountable (sic!) – are not automatically included in the Western discourse on development cooperation:

SIDA's policy for Sector Program Support does not mention parliament, as it calls for "policy dialogue involving all stakeholders, including key national ministries and civil society." (SIDA 2000, 7.) The document describing SIDA's policy for development cooperation in the education sector is different in this regard: it places the parliament before government on the list of the actors that are driving a country's development. (SIDA 2001, 16.)

The World Bank publication on support to the development of education in Africa acknowledges the importance of various stakeholder groups, but not that of the parliament: "Governments, civil society, and external funding agencies will need to establish or reconfigure partnerships to ensure national

ownership and sustainability of innovation and reform programs.” (WB 2001, ix.) “With the move toward more open, democratic societies in Africa, broader government-donor partnerships and engagement of civil society including national NGOs trade unions, and student organizations - in an open debate about education policies and development strategies will become more important.” (WB 2001, 75.) The Bank maintains the same line in the Education Sector Strategy Update of 2005: this document mentions civil society participation but not parliament.

Both the UK policy paper on poverty reduction from 2005 and the Guidelines for European Commission Support to Sector Programs from 2003 make several references to involvement of parliament, whereas the Netherlands’ white paper on new policy orientations for development co-operation from 2003 does not (except to the Dutch Parliament) (DFID 2005; EC 2003; NL 2003).

A recent UNESCO publication on SWAp in the education sector is somewhat more nuanced in that it contrasts the role of “normal democratic decision-making bodies” in policy dialogue with non-representative and token involvement of civil society. The advice given is that one should “not assume that organizations are necessarily representative unless they can be shown to be so, and that one does not eclipse normal parliamentary or local government channels for representation where these do exist” (UNESCO 2006, 19, 30).

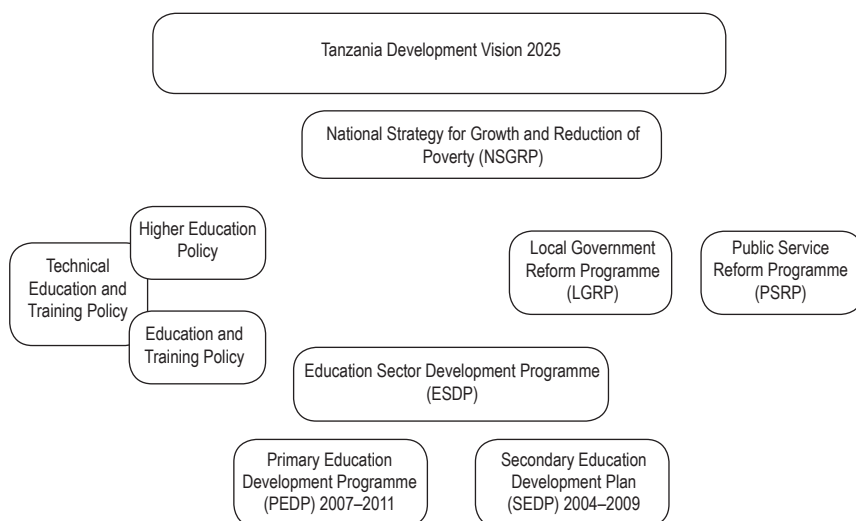
## Education policy in the sector program context – the case of Tanzania

### The Education Sector Development Program

The sector-wide approach came onto the agenda in Tanzania after the formulation of the *Education and Training Policy* (ETP) in 1995. Initially, the SWAp process was largely donor-led. At the turn of the Millennium the

process was in a complete standstill, as both the ownership demonstrated by the Government of Tanzania (GoT) and the engagement of the development partners (DPs) seemed insufficient. The *Education Sector Development Program* (ESDP) encompassing all levels of education was finally completed in 2000/2001. The first operational plan within the ESDP was the *Primary Education Development Plan* (PEDP) 2000–2006. The second phase of the PEDP will cover the period 2007–2011.

The initial focus on the primary education sub-sector widened to cover also general secondary education with the start of the *Secondary Education Development Plan* (SEDP 2004–2009). The first education sector review covering all sub-sectors in February 2006 marked an important step towards a genuine sector-wide approach. A new ESDP document for the years 2008–2018 is currently under preparation.



**Figure. The education policy framework in Tanzania**

Under PEDP, primary education has experienced significant improvements, particularly in quantitative terms. Despite the progress in the field, both the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC)<sup>2</sup> and the DPs) have expressed discomfort with their mutual relationships in the sector program context. MoEC has seen DPs as being too demanding, intrusive and interfering, whereas the DPs have criticised the MoEC for not showing adequate attention or capacity to define the direction and policies of the sector. (Independent Monitoring Group 2005.)

### Ownership, accountability and the role of parliament

Tanzania is a heavily aid-dependent country. According to the GoT 2005/06 budget frame, the domestic revenue was 48 % of the budget ceilings and the development partners contributed nearly 78 % of the development budget. (URT 2005a, 61) These figures illustrate the leverage that external funding agencies can exercise on GoT. The shift from projects toward sector program support is also reflected in the changing composition of the development assistance to Tanzania, as shown in table 1.

**Table 1. Composition of ODA (official development assistance) in the National Budget by Aid Modality**

Type	FY 2002/03	FY 2003/04	FY 2004/05	FY 2005/06	FY 2006/07
General Budget Support	30%	38%	34%	38%	42%
Basket Funds	16%	18%	21%	20%	16%
Project Funds	54%	44%	45%	42%	42%

Source: URT 2006. General Budget Support. Annual Review 2006. Media Information.

The increasing share of external funding channeled through general budget support is in line with GoT's statement that this is its preferred aid modality.

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<sup>2</sup> Now Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, MoEVT

According to a recent evaluation, general budget support has helped to focus the dialogue between external and domestic stakeholders on the strategic issues of policy. (Lawson et al. 2005.) It is possible to interpret this as an indication that sector program support is an enabling factor to external influence on policy making.

Eligibility criteria for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative include the preparation of a comprehensive and long-term national strategy for poverty reduction. In Tanzania, the first Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) was prepared in 2000 and the second one in 2005. Together with the *Tanzania Development Vision 2025*, the PRS outlines the overall long-term vision for the economic and social development of the country. Consequently it also defines the broad framework and operational targets for education sector development.

The second PRS, *National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty* (NSGRP) was published in June 2005. It is expected to cover the period from budget year 2005/06 to 2009/10. This means that the new government which took office after the parliamentary and presidential elections in December 2005 inherited policy priorities and targets that had been negotiated and agreed upon by its predecessor. The NSGRP even states that “*political stability and consistency in policies are imperative and form basis for accountability of Government to the citizenry and development partners*” (URT 2005b, 23). The timing of the first PRS had already reflected this idea of stability and consistency. The strategy was issued in October 2000 only four weeks before national elections. How this issue was discussed – if at all – during the election campaigns of 2000 and 2005 would be an interesting topic for analysis but it is outside the scope of this article.

The criticisms that had pointed out the deficiencies of the consultation process in the preparation of the first PRS were not left unnoticed. In the NSGRP it is stated that the legitimacy of the document requires the Parliament to be fully involved in the process and approval of the strategy (URT 2005b, 18). Yet, when the strategy mentions the importance to strengthen the capacity for policy making, analysis and evaluation, it refers to local and

central level government and to participation of the private sector, civil society and communities – the Parliament is again forgotten. (URT 2005b, 23.) By contrast, controlling the actions of the executive is one of the fundamental functions of parliament as defined in the Constitution of Tanzania, which gives the parliament the power to “*deliberate upon and authorize any long or short term plan which is intended to be implemented in the United Republic and enact a law to regulate the implementation of plan*”.

The NSGRP recognises the oversight role that the Parliament has over Government in the implementation of the process, based on the regular structure of Parliamentary committees – the Committee for Social Services in the case of education. (URT 2005b, 56.) This is in line with the SWAp principle to work through the existing national structures. In reality, it has been claimed that GoT responds to accountability demands foremost through bodies and mechanisms relating to external funding. E.g. the evaluation of general budget support to NSGRP implementation states: “*There are worrying signs that government is making efforts to satisfy donor demands at the expense of timely and user-friendly information for Tanzanian democratic institutions. An increasing proportion of policy documentation was being prepared in English, and generally in technocratic, complicated English, and not in Kiswahili. This suggests that government is reacting to the demands of donors rather than domestic constituents.*” (Lawson et al. 2005, 97). DPs are felt to have better access to the GoT than the Members of Parliament and the alignment of the reporting to the DPs with the domestic accountability processes remains a challenge. (Gerster & Mutakyahwa 2006, 23–26.)

A recent evaluation of the education sector dialogue also points to the problems of accountability and participation. “*For most stakeholders, the reality of dialogue is a predominantly bi-lateral process between the sector ministries and DPs. Generally the degree of participation by DPs is seen as excessive by other stakeholders. Most DPs themselves accept that this is true, yet they believe that their legitimate interests in the process of dialogue are not being fulfilled.*” (OPM 2005, 8). The report does not shed light on the perceptions of MPs, as the

Parliament was not among the five stakeholder groups that were consulted – a fact that itself tells something about the role of Parliament.

One has to be cautious in drawing parallels between countries in their SWAp experience. Yet, many of the conclusions relating to the effects of sector program support in Mozambique are potentially relevant also in the Tanzanian context. According to the research findings, sector program support establishes donors as a very strong interlocutor within the country, to the detriment of Parliament and Civil Society Organizations, thus undermining domestic accountability. It may also undermine democratization efforts by giving a clear advantage to the executive due to the manner and schedule according to which budget issues are discussed with donors. Once the government is ready to submit its budget to the parliament and public, it has reached a level of sophistication – enjoying, furthermore, the approval of donors – that makes it almost immune to any kind of critique. (Macamo 2006.)

Also in Tanzania, the development partners have had the opportunity to be involved in the preparation of Medium Term Expenditure Framework and Budget Guidelines for the education sector. The comments have often been extensive and not only technical in nature. Yet, making remarks about how the state budget should be allocated is highly political. Defining the share of education budget in the state budget as one of the criteria affecting the amount of external funding clearly is an aspiration to influence budgetary decisions. Similarly, the key Tanzanian policy document in the education sector, the ESDP, states that the program was formulated through a process that benefited from the contributions of professionals, the civil society, local and international experts. A joint appraisal by the GoT and the DPs was “*a key milestone in charting the future of education and training over the next two decades*”. (URT 2000, 1.) Notably, the document does not make any reference to the Parliament.

In Tanzania, the first joint review covering the whole education sector took place in February 2006. The purpose of the review was to enable stakeholders to build an effective partnership in the education sector, to monitor the development of the sector and its budgeting issues, and to provide the basis



for a medium-term sector agenda. The first annual review was therefore an important event, not least because a successful sector review is among the conditions stipulated for the continued provision general budget support. Yet, Parliament was not represented among the 150 participants of the review workshop. Presuming that the annual sector review really is the key mechanism for monitoring the performance in the sector, this state of affairs supports the argument that the “workshop mode of democracy” is undermining the Government’s accountability to the elected Parliament.

Another recent example of the problematic position of parliaments in the dialogue between Northern and Southern governments is the so- called Abuja initiative. African Finance and Planning Ministers and representatives of international funding agencies met in May 2006 in Abuja, Nigeria in connection with the ‘Financing for Development in Africa Conference’. The conference resulted in the statement ‘Financing for Development: Abuja Commitment of Action’ that aims to scale up action to achieve the MDGs. The document calls for ambitious planning and budgeting towards the MDGs and recognises the role of parliaments in the following words: *“We acknowledge the importance of these plans being owned by national governments, parliaments and citizens to facilitate effective implementation. --- National parliaments should establish processes for greater involvement in the development of these budgets.”* Yet, the same document expects the countries to be committed to preparation of 10-year costed education plans by September 2006, which makes proper involvement of parliaments truly difficult.

The GoT produced the required plan within the set timetable in consultation with Development Partners and Non-State Actors - but not Parliament. It is also justified to question whether the plan is genuinely owned by Tanzania or rather targeted towards international funding agencies, as the following paragraph seems to indicate:

*“Based on Developed Countries’ commitment in Dakar (2000), and the Abuja meeting of May 2006, that any country with a credible development program will not be left to fail to implement its program because of poverty, the Government has developed the ten year costed plan in anticipation that the G8 member states and other developed countries and multilateral donors will support the plan.”* (URT 2006b, 19.)

By contrast, however, the experience with the PEDP II (2007–2011) may signal a change: members of the Parliament were among the stakeholder groups whose views have been considered in the formulation of the document (URT 2006a, 3).

## Government Budget as a reflection of political will

The Government budget can be seen as the true indication of state priorities or as Joseph Schumpeter has pointed out “*the budget is the skeleton of the state stripped of all misleading ideologies*” (cited in Bräutigam 2004, 666). The process of allocating scarce resources reveals the Government’s highest priorities. As already mentioned in the previous section of this article, in Tanzania, the link between the budget and the Government’s stated policy goals is not necessarily strong and one possible explanation for this is the influence on the budget of national politics that were pushed aside in the formulation of policy papers. In a situation where ambitious objectives of sector programs are beyond the existing implementation capacities and resources, the budget tends to reflect the political will of the Government (e.g. Brown et al. 2001; Rusimbi & Adams 2003).

The experience with the first PRS in Tanzania illuminates the problems of lacking ownership by the government. Until the fiscal year 2001/02, there was a shift in the GoT budget towards the PRS priorities, but after that there was another shift away from those priorities (see table 2).

**Table 2. Government expenditure on PRS priority sectors, 1999/00–2006/07**

	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
	Actual						Budget	
Priority sectors, % of total expenditure	35,9 %	39,3 %	52,1 %	48,9 %	44,2 %	51,8 %	47,7 %	50,3 %
Education, % of total expenditure	18,7 %	20,0 %	23,6 %	21,9 %	17,0 %	21,7 %	16,6 %	18,6 %

This situation demonstrates that in spite of its aid-dependency, GoT had the power to reallocate funds to correspond its own reprioritisation. At the same time, this raises the question whether the PRS reflected the true political priorities of GoT in the first place. The explicit concerns expressed from within the GoT that the PRS gave too much attention to social services lend support to the latter interpretation. In fact, in an interview carried out during the evaluation of the general budget support, the PRS was described as “*a Tanzanian view of what Development Partners believe ought to be the national priorities*”. (Lawson et al. 2005, 69–72.)

A similar discrepancy between policy and plans on the one hand, and the budget, on the other, is evident in the resource allocation within the PEDP. Although the plans and budgets were formulated as from 2003/4 to reflect a shifting emphasis towards quality improvement from the initial focus on quantitative expansion, the actual disbursements have shown little deviation from the previous spending patterns. (Independent Monitoring Group 2005) Teacher training, for example, is one area that has repeatedly experienced considerable cuts. Also items related to equity have received significantly less emphasis in the budget than in the rhetoric of policy documents. For example, special needs education has been allocated very meagre resources in the financial plans and even less, if any, in the actual disbursements.

In Tanzania, the development partners are seen as striving to increase their influence over budgetary decisions. This is conflicting with the observation

arising from the analysis of the education sector dialogue: “*The budget is a political process and, it is inevitable that the priorities of Tanzanian Ministers and Members of Parliament will at times differ from those of development agency bureaucrats.*” (OPM 2005, 10) The legislature’s ‘power of the purse’ is a fundamental feature of democracy. (Bräutigam 2004, 666.) In Tanzania, however, there are several limitations to the Parliament’s capacity to exercise its power, including the lack of understanding of budgetary questions and a tight budget cycle which doesn’t encourage proper involvement. The role is also undermined by the fact that the budget is usually revised significantly after it has been approved by the Parliament. (Lawson et al. 2005, 94–95.) Based on the last remark, it is tempting to conclude that in Tanzania, the actual expenditure just as much as the budget is the manifestation of the “true political will”.

## Global agenda and national politics in the making of education policy

This section attempts to illuminate with the help of a few concrete examples the influence of the global agenda and of national politics on the education policy agenda in Tanzania, and particularly the discrepancies between the two.

Unlike the first PRS, the NSGRP is not based on sectors but on “clusters”. Education comes under Cluster II, “Improvement of Quality of Life and Social Well-Being”.

The two broad aims in this cluster are:

- To improve quality of life and social well-being, with particular focus on the poorest and most vulnerable groups;
- To reduce inequalities in outcomes (e.g. education, survival, health) across geographic, income, age, gender and other groups. (URT 2005b, 35.)

The operational targets of NSGRP with regard to education have also a strong focus on equity. Three out of the six enrolment-related targets explicitly refer to

vulnerable groups (e.g. disabled children, orphans). The first target in relation to secondary education is: *“Increased percentage of girls and boys with disabilities and OVCs who qualify for secondary education, enroll and complete secondary schools by 2010”*. (URT 2005b, 42–44.) This is a remarkable emphasis in a country which has an extremely low enrolment ratio in secondary education.

In the national discourses there is clearly more emphasis on themes that do not arise from the global agenda, but rather from a traditional Tanzanian agenda, such as national unity solidarity and collective welfare (see also Närman 1998, 122). In contrast with the strong focus on equity and vulnerable groups in e.g. NSGRP, it is also notable that when President Kikwete in front of the national Parliament listed the areas on which Government will concentrate in the field of education, equity did not receive particular attention (Kikwete 2005).

Likewise, when the Minister of Education and Culture presented in his budget speech in 2003 the eight objectives of PEDP implementation for the fiscal year 2003/04, the emphasis was clearly on the quantitative development targets related to enrolment or construction activities. Objectives related to quality or equity were not high on the agenda. (Mungai 2003.) The importance of quantitative aspects compared to those of quality and equality was repeated in the budget speeches the following years. The case of SEDP provides a good example of this. The World Bank as the primary external supporter of the program had recommended a moderate growth scenario that it considered to be more feasible than the high growth scenario preferred by the GoT. In his budget speeches of 2004 and 2005, the Minister spoke to the Parliament of an expansion that exceeded even the high growth scenario. Also the particular attention given to educational development in underserved rural areas, advocated by the WB and consequently also included in the SEDP, was not present in the budget speech of the Minister of Education (Wedgwood 2005, 11–14).

Without further research it is not possible to assess more concretely, to what extent the above-mentioned focus on vulnerability and equity is a rhetorical reflection of the global agenda vs. an outcome of domestic considerations. It

is worthwhile to note, however, that some of the most influential external funding agencies in Tanzania emphasize giving attention to vulnerable groups in their aid policy. SIDA, for example, has a strong focus on disadvantaged groups, including the disabled (SIDA 2001). Also the World Bank gives priority support to programs that ensure equal opportunities to excluded children (World Bank 2001, 69).

The inaugurating speech of the newly elected President Kikwete in Parliament in December 2005 gives another example how the GoT agenda and priorities are formulated in front of a domestic audience. Peace, stability and national unity are emphasised even if these are not part of the global technocratic agenda on education. The GoT's plans in relation to these are presented in very concrete terms, as compared to the issues arising from the global agenda on education. Among the ten strategies expected to strengthen national unity, three are related to education: the education system will be used to strengthen the national unity through e.g. creation of Pan-Territorial Secondary Schools which will deliberately mix talented students from all corners of the country, the curricula for civic education will be redesigned to focus on encouraging nationalism and patriotism, and religious organisations will be encouraged to open their schools to students from all religious backgrounds. (Kikwete op.cit.)

An interesting topic on the education policy agenda is the so-called cross-cutting issues (CCI). This is a widely used concept in the current international aid discourse. These are themes that should be *mainstreamed* and *monitored* (two other typical concepts in the aid discourse) in the development projects and programs for development cooperation to be effective. There is variation between agencies what is included in this concept, but usually at least gender is referred to. The concept of CCI did not appear in the original PEDP document, but it soon became an integral part of various PEDP-related documents, including the PEDP II.

The definition of CCI has not been completely established in the context of PEDP, but it has covered at least three topics: HIV/AIDS, gender and environmental issues. The way CCI are handled in the documents often leaves

the reader with an impression that they do not stem from the national agenda but are rather an outcome of external influence. In some occasions this is very clear. For example in the PEDP review report 2003, the challenges relating to environment cover issues such as conducive learning environment and availability of latrines and first aid boxes (URT 2003, 68). This confusion around the term “environment” that according to its original meaning in the international aid discourse should refer to environmental sustainability could be seen as an example of what happens when the agenda has been more influenced by the global agenda than local politics.

As evidenced by policy documents and budgets, as well as of discourse outside the written policy, the quantitative expansion of education (increasing enrolment and related construction of school buildings and recruitment of teachers) – with initial focus on the primary education sub-sector but gradually also at higher levels – has been the real priority of the Tanzanian government. Even if the stated policy aims cover all necessary items of the global education agenda, the quantitative development is the area that has received most attention. The strong emphasis on quantity over quality has become a regular point of disagreement between the GoT and DPs (Wedgwood 2005, 13) (on the relationship between populist tendencies and an emphasis on quantitative expansion in education policy, see also Takala 1998).

## Concluding remarks and issues for further research

One prerequisite for successful implementation of policy is that the policy goals are realistic. In the sector program context, the influence of the global agenda and the various expectations of different external actors contribute to development strategies and targets that tend to be over-ambitious both in terms of scope and timetable. Insofar as policies formulated in the sector program context fail to take into account the political realities and the specific context of the country, lack of local ownership and seeds of failure will be built in the programs.

Without interview data from Tanzania it is not possible to draw any definitive conclusions about the interaction and influence of different stakeholders in the making of the education policy agenda. The analysis based on documents, undertaken for this article, suggests that the degree of external influence on the formulation of the official policy agenda is considerable, in spite of the widespread rhetoric of ownership. The analysis comparing policy formulations and priorities of the Tanzanian policy documents with those of the donor agencies can be complemented with information gathering among stakeholders. Analysing the differences that exist between the policy documents that are directly connected with sector program support and the priorities that the GoT brings forward in front of national audiences provides interesting further information.

On the other hand, the possibilities of the global agenda to replace national politics in the making of education policy should not be exaggerated. Clearly, the influence of technocratic rationality has its limitations in practice. Even in a situation where the formulation of the official policy is a reflection of the technocratic approach, there is still room for the domestic political considerations to enter into the picture.

The degrees of freedom are partly related to the above-mentioned ambitiousness of sector programs and PRSPs. When the stated goal of a development plan is very comprehensive and vague, such as that of the 10-year Plan in Tanzania (“Expand access, quality and equity at all levels of education, both formal and non-formal, including vulnerable groups”), the government has considerable opportunities to direct and redirect the policy according to its political priorities. Another possibility is related to the budget. Even when the sector program designed under external influence does include more detailed plans, in a situation of scarce resources the budget is a way for the local actors to reorient policy according to their real priorities. If the status of the parliament was strong, this would be the opportunity for the democratically elected body to exercise its power. In Tanzania, however, this is not yet the case, which means that the budget-related opportunity to regain local ownership of the education policy is a tool rather for the government than for the parliament.



A widespread approach in the promotion of democracy have been various democracy assistance projects and programs. The possibilities of such separate efforts to promote democracy, however, are very limited if the wider environment of sector program support is actually an obstacle to the development of democracy by undermining the role of parliaments. Parliaments of the South are not perfect in their functions and capacities, sometimes very far from it, but still the governments should be accountable to them. Respect for local politics and democratically elected bodies should be genuinely mainstreamed in all development cooperation, including the principles and practices of sector program support.

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Tuomas Takala and Mojibur Doftori

# ROLE OF NGOS IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION SECTOR PROGRAMS IN NEPAL AND TANZANIA<sup>1</sup>

## Background

### Introduction

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have come to play a prominent role in the basic education of marginalised groups in many developing countries. NGOs emerged as alternative providers, to compensate for the State's failure to provide basic education for economically and culturally disadvantaged groups. NGOs have been working to reach out-of-school children and dropouts from public schools. Though these organisations differ in their ideologies, strategies and geographical coverage, they are generally assumed to represent a pro-poor orientation, flexibility, innovation, and participatory approaches in their educational activities. They are also typically dependent on international sources of funding. Since the 1990s, many – especially large – NGOs have entered the arena of advocacy and policy dialogue with government and international agencies in the education sector. Through these activities, NGOs are believed to strengthen civil society by giving diverse population groups a voice in policy discussions. One of the key goals of Northern development

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<sup>1</sup> We thank Petra Packalen (Senior expert at the National Board of Education and member of our research project group), Byoma Tamrakar (Research assistant at the Centre for Vocational Education, University of Tampere), Arnaldo Pellini (Research advisor at the Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences), Nelli Piattoeva (Teaching assistant and doctoral student at the Department of Education, University of Tampere) and Minna Peltola (Planner at the Finnish Missionary Society and Education advisor to the Lutheran Church in Senegal) for their insightful comments on earlier versions of this chapter. Responsibility for the interpretations and conclusions presented remains entirely with the authors.

cooperation agencies is to support of NGOs in developing countries in order to strengthen civil society. The Finnish Development Cooperation Report 2004 states the aim of NGO support in the following terms: “The development policy program emphasises that the strength of non-governmental cooperation lies in its diversity and creativity. Non-governmental cooperation is extremely significant in supporting the civil societies of developing countries and building democratic societies. Civil society is an important source of strength in achieving the goals of the development policy program” (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland 2005, 18).

NGO activities in developing countries are typically organized in the project mode and supported by external funding. In the sector program context, the justification for NGO activities and their role-definition is obviously facing a difficult dilemma. On the one hand, many of these organisations provide educational opportunities for hard-to-reach groups in a flexible and innovative manner. Against the sheer scale of non-enrolment and dropout from public schools, NGOs thus provide hope for filling immediate educational needs of the disadvantaged. On the other hand, NGOs are blamed for creating parallel educational provision that operates outside the national system of educational administration and monitoring, with poor or no coordination with the latter, and with bleak prospects for achieving sustainable results on a large scale. This necessitates rethinking of the role of NGOs in the education sector in relation to both Government and external funding agencies.

As Education Sector Development Programs (ESDPs) are devised and implemented under the leadership of the Ministries of Education, there is a risk that NGOs lose such potential for innovation as they may previously have had and that their mandate in reaching the marginalized may be reduced into serving as sub-contractors of government in the field of education, thereby losing their civil society characteristics. However, beyond recognition of such risks, there is as yet little analytical and evidence-based understanding on how a role for NGOs might fit into the broader context of national ESDPs. Reports of a study commissioned by NORAD (Norwegian Agency for Development) on the role of civil society in sector programs in general (Kruse 2004a;



2004b) and in the education sector of Zambia in particular (Lexow 2004) are notable exceptions. A more recent study, “Civil society and the governance of education in the context of SWAp”, undertaken for CIDA by Mundy et al. has carried out a desk study of eight countries and field studies in four of these cases (Burkina Faso, Kenya, Mali and Tanzania).

The purpose of this literature-based first part of our article is to shed light on the role of NGOs in the evolving ESDP context: on how such a role can possibly be justified by its expected benefits, and on accompanying risks and challenges. In addition, we look at donor agencies’ policy positions on the role of NGOs in the context of sector programs.

## Content of the study

The study was carried out in four, partly overlapping, phases. The first phase of collecting and reviewing relevant research literature, donor agency documents and documentary data from Nepal and Tanzania was carried out during January–July 2005. On the basis of this first phase, a paper was prepared and presented in the 11th General Conference of European Association for Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI) held in Bonn during 20.–24.9.2005. A thoroughly revised version of the paper was published in the e-journal Development Think Tank Watch (Takala & Doftori 2006).

The second phase consisted of collection of data from Nepal and Tanzania by interviewing relevant officials of government, Nepalese and Tanzanian NGOs, bilateral and multilateral funding and technical assistance agencies, International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) and academic researchers (see list in Annex 2). Officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland and The Finnish National Board of Education, who are familiar with Nepal and Tanzania, were requested to suggest relevant interviewees in the two countries. Our contacts within the countries generated additional suggestions.

Persons who were on our list generally accepted to be interviewed, but some were eventually not available for the interviews, principally because of

travel or other overriding duties. All the interviews were conducted by Mojibur Doftori. The fieldwork in Nepal took place between 27.8. and 10.9.2005 and consisted of 22 interviews. Experience gained in the interviews in Nepal was instructive for planning the fieldwork in Tanzania. The latter was carried out in two parts, 11.–24.3.2006 and 25.11.–6.12.2006, and yielded interviews with 27 informants. A semi-structured interview framework was used for the fieldwork, in order to ensure a degree of uniformity in their content but also to allow for variation in the course of each interview, depending on the position, experience and views expressed by the informants. The interviews were conducted in English, which the interviewees were comfortable with, and lasted on average approximately one hour. Answers were recorded in handwriting. All the interviewees were very cooperative, and overall they represented a multifaceted knowledge of and experience with the respective national education sector programs and NGO activities in the education sector.

After the fieldwork periods, the interview notes were written as a file that constituted the database for thematic analysis. In the analysis, we have strived to be sensitive both to differences of opinion and to common views expressed by the interviewees or sub-groups of them. Findings from this phase of analysis were presented in a meeting with representatives of Finnish NGOs working in the education sector in developing countries, convened by the Service Centre for Development Cooperation, in September 2006, and at the conference of the Comparative and International Education Society, held in Baltimore, USA, 25.2.–1.3.2007. Finally, a comparative analysis was undertaken, and a version of its results was presented at the UKFIET conference in Oxford, 11.–13.9.2007.

## NGOs in the education sector in developing countries

The rise of NGOs in the education sector is closely intertwined with the educational history of developing countries. Religion and (other) indigenous knowledge were central to education in non-Western countries before colonial

rule. During colonial time, Christian church organisations played a significant role in spreading Western forms of schooling (Mundy & Murphy 2001). After having gained their political independence, the newly independent countries have experimented with development paths that – regardless of their ideological hue – have been Western-oriented. Paradigmatically, education has been considered a vehicle that would replace traditional social values, behaviours and institutions with modern ones. Bilateral and multilateral donor agencies have played a prominent role in the setting of educational policy in the majority of developing countries (e.g. Takala 1998; King 2004). Because of their dependency on Western models of education, the education systems of many developing countries are disconnected from indigenous knowledge bases (Doftori 2004) and suffer from lack of practical relevance (Hoppers 1996).

Against the limited capacity of public schools to reach all children, NGOs have served as alternative providers of basic education in many developing countries, to fill the educational needs of disadvantaged groups. Many problems in public sector schools (e.g. lack of relevance and low quality of education, inflexible school timetables, insensitivity to the situation of girls, punishment and humiliation in school) have contributed to the emergence of NGOs as alternative providers of basic education, mostly through non-formal arrangements rather than primary schooling. Moreover, whereas public schools as institutions are geared to preparing students for jobs in the formal sector, many poor households in developing countries find it too ambitious to send their children in the primary school, as they have small prospects to find a job outside the non-formal sector after school completion.

Educational activities of NGOs have been commonly regarded as innovative ways of addressing the needs of underprivileged groups and influencing the process of educational change (Archer 1994; Mundy & Murphy 2001; Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond & Wolf 2002; Kabeer et al. 2003). However, NGOs vary in the size and coverage of their projects: there are e.g. community-based organisations, regional and large national NGOs. Some work on a voluntary basis, while others have a bureaucratic structure and enjoy access to sizable amounts of external funding. NGOs also follow diverse educational

approaches in reaching the marginalised groups. Along with provision of basic education as such, many NGOs also provide more extensive educational support to their beneficiary groups (free books and stationery, school lunches, free transport, support for further education or training, residential care, health and welfare services, family loans).

While interventions by NGOs in the provision of basic education can be seen as a response to perceived deficiencies of the public school system, a manifest problem is lack of coordination of the NGO activities with public schooling. If graduates from NGO schools wish to continue their studies in a public school, problems may arise because of differences in the curriculum and standards between the two systems. The study of Doftori (op.cit.) in Bangladesh and Nepal found that only one out of ten NGOs was able to connect the education they offer with that of the government system in any true sense. Hence, it may appear that by allowing NGOs to play a role in the education sector, governments are supporting the creation of educational ghettos for marginalised groups. The counterargument is that, if diverse forms of provision were prohibited on grounds of egalitarianism, some children from poor households might then remain totally outside the reach of basic education. According to this line of thinking, educational diversity opened up by NGOs is thus justifiable in many developing countries as an interim measure. A further problem is that few NGOs coordinate their educational activities with each other, as they compete against each other in attracting donor funding.

In many cases, governments have felt uncomfortable with the existence of NGOs in the education sector, perceiving that these challenge the government's sphere of influence where government used to be the sole authority before. Beyond the issue of service provision, there are examples of governments becoming irritated when NGOs work with advocacy and social mobilisation and therein come to contest educational policies of government.

## Literature-based perspectives on the role of NGOs in the context of ESDPs

As sector program support is an evolving approach in the field of development cooperation and relatively unknown to many stakeholders, the role of different actors under the new modality is vague. A critical position underlines the fact that SWAp is in fact a donor-initiated rather than home-grown formula. Hence the donor agencies collectively may have the upper hand in national policy-making of aid-dependent countries under SWAp (King 2004). From this perspective, it is paradoxical that the increased emphasis placed in the development cooperation discourse on ownership of Southern governments is accompanied by a consensual and collective donor agenda that shapes the educational policies of developing countries (Takala op.cit.; Samoff 1999; Al-Samarrai, Bennell & Colclough 2002). Because of the united front that donor agencies can represent under conditions of sector program support, external funding has gained more leverage and aid-dependent countries (both their Ministries of Education and NGOs) have less freedom to experiment beyond the policy framework that has been agreed upon with donors (Tomlinson & Foster 2004). At the same time, donors are in a position to put pressure on achieving such government-NGO partnership as they deem desirable.

A frequently voiced concern is that the introduction of ESDPs may actually constitute a step towards more centralised educational decision-making, which may make it difficult for NGOs to preserve their community orientation (Bray 2003; Rose 2003) – on the other hand, decentralization within the state apparatus is admittedly one of the objectives of many ESDPs. A general perception is also that under conditions of sector program support it has become more difficult for NGOs to obtain funding directly from abroad, as donors increasingly prefer to channel their funds to Southern governments, either directly through the Treasury or through a “pool” or “basket” funding arrangement, following a set of common procedures. A consequent risk, therefore, is that the innovative potential of NGOs in the education sector may be squeezed (Swift op.cit.). A study of Poverty Reduction Strategic Plans

(PRSPs), which during the last decade have become the broad framework for sector programs in low-income countries, shows that non-formal education for out-of-school children, mostly carried out by NGOs, has a low status within the PRSPs of several African, Asian and Latin American countries. At the same time, preparation of the PRSPs has in some countries been a learning process in how to better involve NGOs in the preparations (Caillods & Hallak 2004, 41, 114, 150).

In different country contexts the extent and nature of NGO-Government collaboration in a sector program context is of course variable. The NORAD study on sector programs concludes that the political space of NGOs depends on NGO capacity to innovate and convince the government of the merits of their activities in reaching marginalized population groups. Furthermore, as one would expect, this study found that the level of participation of NGOs in SWAp processes “seems positively correlated with the maturity and strength of civil society” and that traditions of authoritarian political rule seem to hamper inclusion of these organisations in the SWAp process (Kruse 2004b, ii). On the basis of a comparative analysis, Kruse argues that in the sector program context, there is a risk that governments do not allow NGOs to genuinely participate in the process of policy-making and sector program planning. Rather governments may invite some of the “well-behaving” NGOs to take part in consultations to formally legitimise the process, due to donor pressure to do so (Kruse 2004a; 2004b). At the same time governments may try to control NGOs in different ways. Referring to the government-NGO partnership in the education sector in Bangladesh, Mia points out that “Government set rigid conditions, made unilateral decisions without discussion with the concerned NGOs and in general treated the partner NGOs as contractors. And if the NGOs disagreed with these conditions, the partnership broke down” (Mia 2005, 89).

There is also a potential conflict in that, on the one hand, external funding agencies require “consultation” with NGOs, which are presumed to represent “the poor”, but whose lines of accountability are unclear. On the other hand, the role of the incipient or established processes of formal representative

democracy is typically marginal in the preparation of sector programs (see the article of Packalen in this book).

In countries where a large number of NGOs are operating in the education sector, these are typically a heterogeneous and fragmented group. They may function under an umbrella organisation, but at the same time individual NGOs compete with each other for foreign funding. As a result, they cannot easily form an effective coalition to pressurise governments on issues of educational policy. Within ESDPs, large national NGOs may be given sub-contracts to implement parts of the program devised by government and donor agencies. To avoid critical NGOs and to reap benefits from such a collaborative scheme, Government officials may even be involved in creation of “pocket NGOs” or “briefcase NGOs”, in order to be able to award the contract of service delivery to friends and relatives under the façade of government-NGO partnership. This has aroused criticism against some NGOs for pursuing self-interest and neglecting the poorest members of the community (Bray 2000; Swift op.cit.). From this perspective, many Southern NGOs working in the education sector cannot be considered as representing civil society.

Among the Northern actors in the field of development cooperation, there is less cooperation and coordination than one might expect on the basis of the SWAp rhetoric. Even in cases where individual bilateral agencies are in the frontline in initiating ESDPs in their partner countries, the NGOs of the respective countries may be poorly aware of or even interested in these programs. A report on Finnish NGOs working in the education sector in developing countries (Mundo 2003) demonstrates that some NGOs have deliberately operated in isolation from the broader sector context. The results of this study also show that only few NGOs were able to explain the connections between their own projects on the one hand, and the education sector programs and PRSPs in the respective countries, on the other. Similarly, the NORAD study on SWAp and civil society found that “Norwegian NGOs have shown limited interest and/or knowledge about SWAp” (Kruse 2004b, 44). Another study, on the education sector program in Uganda, notes that “NGOs tend to be more accountable to their individual funding sources than to the government”

and that, paradoxically, NGOs “cherish their independence while at the same time desiring to be more fully involved” in the sector program (Eilor 2004, 88).

The following table summarizes the key differences between the role of NGOs under the project mode and SWAp.

**Table 1: Role of NGOs under the project approach and SWAp**

<b>NGOs under the project approach</b>	<p>Focus more on service provision than on advocacy</p> <p>Local solutions to educational problems, with little government control</p> <p>Micro-level innovation without considering macro-level change and with poor prospects for generalizable and sustainable results</p> <p>Direct donor funding to NGOs</p> <p>Lack of coordination among NGOs</p> <p>Limited technical capacity of NGOs</p>
<b>NGOs under SWAp</b>	<p>NGOs work under sector programs owned by the national government</p> <p>Donor pressure on introducing/strengthening government-NGO partnership</p> <p>NGO activities expected to be complementary to the public education system and contribute to large-scale reform</p> <p>SWAp is centralistic and reduces the autonomy and innovativeness of NGOs</p> <p>Funding of NGOs through the sector program is limited</p> <p>Increased NGO role in policy dialogue, constrained by capacity</p>

## Donor agencies' policy positions on SWAp, ESDPs and the role of NGOs

Introduction of ESDPs is generally seen by donor agencies as a step forward to bring about ownership, coherence and effectiveness in education sector development cooperation. Even though there is little debate among donor agencies on the advantages of SWAp in principle, the agencies have diverse



policy positions on their support to sector programs vs. projects, including NGO-projects.

This section is based on analysis of documents of the major (and some minor) agencies that are active in education sector development cooperation.<sup>2</sup> Here we rely on the information provided by Hasegawa (2002) and Riddell (2003), supplemented by perusal of first-hand documents. The analysis is focused on the principal policy positions concerning SWAp in general, and in the education sector (or basic education sub-sector) in particular, as well as on the agencies' positions concerning the desirable role of NGOs in the context of SWAp/ESDPs. Some of the documents may reflect policies that have since their publication been modified by evolving practice.

An important consideration for the donor agencies collectively is that many developing countries – particularly among those that are furthest away from the EFA goal – are weak in their institutional capacity to benefit from SWAp. For instance, it is known that in several developing countries, which are receiving sector program support, a significant portion of the total volume of external funds made available have remained unutilized (Takala 2003). Acknowledging this constraint, along with providing support to sector programs the donor agencies also continue to support projects particularly in the context of weak public sector capacity.

As an example, an EU document states that: “Projects can have high value in supporting targeted poverty-focused interventions, capacity building and technical assistance, as well as the development of innovative concepts in education, when they are aligned with government agency” (European Commission 2005, 3). And a recent review of Norwegian development

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<sup>2</sup> This review of agency positions covers documents of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Netherlands Government, U.K. Department for International Development (DfID), Germany (GTZ), France, Finland's Department for International Development Policy, Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), European Union (EU), World Bank, Oxfam, ActionAid, Save the Children Alliance, and Plan International.

cooperation states: “While it (i.e. Norway) will continue to support civil society organisations that have an advocacy role and act as watchdogs of governments, it will only support service providers that align their activities with national policy frameworks, e.g. the PRSP, other development or sector plan. This could have a positive impact in terms of harmonising NGO work” (OECD 2005, 63). In contrast, some of the bilateral agencies (Germany, France, Japan and USA) have a more reserved position concerning SWAp and a more favourable view of the continued significance of the traditional project approach. These positions are linked primarily to concerns over accountability and effectiveness.

The principal finding from the analysis of agency positions concerning the role of NGOs is that there is no clear policy among the agencies on the scope and kinds of support to be directed to NGOs in the sector program context. This probably reflects the general perception that existing ESDPs represent various transition-type arrangements and hence the need for reflecting and deciding on the role of NGOs against the SWAp ideal may not appear as an immediately relevant task. Most donor agencies consider that a role for NGOs is still significant under existing ESDP arrangements, due to the fact that public schools have not yet been able to reach the disadvantaged groups and that some NGOs have experience in innovations to make education relevant and contextual. However, in the changed circumstances, NGOs are expected to supplement the role of government and to align their activities with the framework defined by the ESDPs.

On the issue of external funding to NGOs, most of the donor agencies are in principle in favour of channelling their funding increasingly to national governments, leaving open the question, to what extent NGOs could receive their funding, if any, through the government system. Even though many donor agencies have encouraged initiation of government-NGO partnership in the education sector, or deepening of such cooperation where it already exists, in practice funding of NGOs usually does not come through the sector program. Instead, continued channelling of funds from bilateral donor agencies and international NGOs directly to national and local NGOs is

regarded as justified. Leading international NGOs working on education in developing countries (Oxfam, Save the Children Alliance, Action Aid, Plan International), as well as the umbrella organization Global Campaign for Education, call for more coordinated and effective support to the education sector. However, these NGOs do not in their documents go into further detail on principles and strategies concerning the role of NGOs in a sector program context.

In some of the agency documents there are also indications of encouragement of NGOs towards an advocacy role in the design ESDPs, to act as civil society representatives and to press their governments to make education more pro-poor, as well as to function as watchdogs to program implementation. This is an obviously sensitive issue, as the contribution of NGOs to the building of civil society is hardly a high priority aim of the Southern partner governments, and could be a source of conflicts. Another notable issue is that the advocacy work of many national NGOs of developing countries is connected to the transnational social movements and organizations, emanating from the active support of Northern governments that have come to play a pioneering role in global agenda setting (Mundy & Murphy 2001; Tomlinson 2007). The impact of international NGOs is evident in the move of Southern NGOs from the traditional role of service delivery towards an advocacy role. In this context, Southern NGOs do not necessarily represent their national civil society, as much of their agenda consists of replication of messages spread by the transnational networks.

Table 2 summarizes the picture that emerges from our analysis:

**Table 2: Key issues in donor agencies' policy positions on SWAp, ESDPs and NGOs**

<b>Key issue</b>	<b>What does it mean?</b>	<b>Donor positions</b>
<i>National ownership</i>	Governments are owners of all national policies and programs of development.	All the major donor agencies have endorsed this principle.
<i>Sector program support</i>	The ideal is to provide support to sector programs of partner countries, using standardized rather than agency-specific procedures (possibly combined with general budget support).	Canada, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, U.K., EU and the World Bank have clear positions in favour of sector program support. France, Germany, Japan and USA have a more ambiguous position on this issue.
<i>Project support</i>	As the management capacity of governments of many partner countries is weak, it is deemed necessary to continue some amount of project support for the foreseeable future.	Most of the donors espouse this position, on condition that the projects are in line with the ESDPs. France, Germany, Japan and USA have a particularly favourable view of the project mode even in conditions of SWAp.
<i>Role of NGOs in sector programs</i>	Given the limited capacity of public schools to reach marginalized groups, NGOs continue to play a justified role within ESDPs. NGOs are also expected to contribute to building of civil society.	All donors see comparative advantages of NGOs in reaching hard-to-reach groups, but there is increased emphasis on the advocacy and watchdog roles of NGOs over service provision.
<i>Direct support to NGOs</i>	In principle, NGOs have come to work under the framework of national ESDPs and the justification for channelling external funding directly to them is an open question.	Most donors have accepted the principle of increasing the share of sector program support in their total portfolio. However, funding to NGOs typically still comes directly from bilateral agencies and international NGOs rather than through the sector programs. Some agencies (e.g. USAID) state explicitly that they see continuation of such direct support as being justified.

## Case study on Nepal

### Description of the Basic and Primary Education Program (BPEP) and the Education For All (EFA) 2004–9 program

Since 1991, Nepal has had a multi-party political system, with frequent changes of government. Regardless of the political shifts, educational development has been high on the agenda of all successive governments, reflecting a strong popular demand to expand access to education and to narrow existing disparities related to geographical location, caste and ethnicity. In educational development, as in other sectors, the Government of Nepal has been heavily dependent on external funding.

The Basic and Primary Education Program (BPEP) was initially designed and implemented as a large conventional project supported by the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the World Bank, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). In Phase I (1992–98), BPEP operated in 40 out of the 75 districts of Nepal (Department for International Development Cooperation 2002, 85). During the BPEP I period the Sector-Wide Approach was introduced and became the framework for the second phase of BPEP (1999–2003). BPEP II was supported by a group of five donors: the World Bank, EU, DANIDA, Finland and Norway through a basket funding arrangement, where the agencies' financial contributions are merged into a single fund but not channeled via the Government of Nepal budget. In addition, project-type funding to BPEP II was provided by JICA, UNICEF and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

BPEP II (Ministry of Education and Sports 2001) emphasized targeting the disadvantaged groups that BPEP I was not able to reach. It also gave attention to the role of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) in coordination of the primary education sub-sector and to involvement of local government bodies and communities in educational planning and management. Overall responsibility for planning and implementing of different NFE programs was

placed in the newly created Non-Formal Education Development Centre, which amalgamated the former NFE Division of the Curriculum Development Centre, the NFE Section of MOES and the NFE Unit of BPEP (Ministry of Education 1997, 49).

As part of restructuring the Ministry of Education, the Department of Education (DOE) was established in 1999, and primary education and non-formal educational activities came under to direct control of the department. Five Regional Education Directorates (REDs) and 75 District Education Offices (DEOs) came under the direct control of DOE. The role of RED is to implement educational programs under the direction of MOES and DOE, and DEOs prepare, implement and monitor educational programs at district level under the guidance of RED. However, district level planning remained too distant from the realities of the school and community, and as a result, the EFA 2004–9 program focuses more on community management of schools. This objective also entails building partnerships with Nepalese and international NGOs.

The EFA 2004–9 program of the Government of Nepal (from now on we will refer to it simply as the EFA program) is designed within the framework of the fifteen-year National Plan of Action for Education for All by 2015. The three main objectives of the program include:

1. Ensuring access and equity in primary education;
2. Enhancing quality and relevance of primary education; and
3. Improving efficiency and institutional capacity of schools and institutions at all levels (Ministry of Education and Sports 2003, 80).

The primary education net enrollment figure reported in the EFA document for the year 2000 is 80 % and 88 for 2005. In the same period, the survival rate up to grade 5 is reported to have increased from 63 to 71 % (Ministry of Education and Sports 2005). Among other objectives, the EFA program has a special focus on education as a means for improving conditions of children from disadvantaged groups, and girls more generally. The program is concerned with both enrolment of children currently out-of-school and

retention of those who are already in the system up to successful completion of primary schooling. Non-formal education is an important element of the EFA program (Ministry of Education and Sports 2003). As government has been largely unable to provide basic education for disadvantaged groups in Nepal, the role of NGOs in educational service delivery and social mobilization is highlighted in the EFA program and also in the Government's Tenth Five-Year Plan, which also has become Nepal's Poverty Reduction Strategic Plan (PRSP).

## Involvement of NGOs in BPEP and the EFA 2004–9 program

### *Areas of NGO participation*

Until the 1990s, the role of NGOs in Nepalese society was quite limited and their activities were tightly controlled by Government. However, during this time some Nepalese NGOs and INGOs already gained experience in working in non-formal education of disadvantaged groups. At the time of the political change towards democracy, in 1991, there were a total of 400–450 registered NGOs operating in Nepal, of which some 50 were INGOs (FINNIDA 1994, 7–8). In the new political climate, successive governments adopted a liberal position vis-à-vis NGO activities and as a result, the number of NGOs surged upwards. According to an estimate given in 2004, there are approximately 200 major national NGOs and INGOs working in Nepal, along with thousands of community or district-based NGOs. The majority of the former group as well as quite many of the latter are involved in educational activities (DANIDA 2004, 63). NGOs mostly focus their activities on education for disadvantaged groups (girls, lower caste, ethno-linguistic minority groups, disabled children) who are either left out or dropouts from public schools. Such activities typically aim at providing literacy and life-skills that are relevant in the conditions of the disadvantaged groups. Reflecting the diversity of contexts, NGO approaches include flexibility of school timing, gender sensitivity in the curriculum and teaching methods, learner-centered pedagogy, shortened courses and

accelerated progression, family motivation and support, teacher training and development of learning materials.

In 1998, the Government of Nepal made a provision that NFE programs will be implemented by NGOs. More recently, Government has decided to allow NGOs to work also in formal education, particularly with community schools. Here NGOs contribute through teacher training, provision of learning materials, scholarships, uniforms, classroom construction and furnishing (DANIDA 2004, 64). Alongside these activities, NGOs have in the recent years become increasingly involved in Early Childhood Development (ECD) programs.

Within BPEP I there was little scope for consultation with NGOs, whereas the situation has improved under BPEP II and the EFA program. As a result of the NGO influence, targeting disadvantaged groups has been given more attention within these programs. An interviewee said: *“The EFA program has tried to define disadvantaged children more clearly than BPEP. Disadvantaged groups identified include girls, Dalits (23 castes are identified as Dalits) and Janajati (indigenous people – 59 groups), children with disability, working and street children, children whose parents are in jail and children whose parents are suffering from HIV/AIDS and conflict”*. This is a remarkable achievement in a country where rigid social stratification and cultural taboos traditionally have been obstacles to the participation of disadvantaged groups in education. However, other interviewees brought up a contrasting picture of NGO activities on the ground: *“Large NGOs in Nepal are often not good as they keep their work limited in urban areas. NGOs are seldom present in remote areas where they are most needed”*.

At the time of BPEP I, the NGOs involved in the education sector usually were poorly aware of the content of the sector program or had an uncritical view of it. However, the situation has changed over the years. Though NGOs continue to be predominantly involved in educational service delivery, they are also increasingly participating in educational policy dialogue and voicing their critical opinions at the national level. Advocacy in education policy issues is an area where mostly large and nationally known NGOs have become active.



According to one interviewee, “NGOs face dilemmas in balancing the role of service delivery and building civil society”.

### *Basis for NGO involvement*

In the case of Nepal, government has no explicitly defined basis for involving NGOs as partners in the national education sector programs. In this context, government has total discretion in selecting NGOs to participate in the design and implementation of these programs. All the NGO representatives interviewed for our study were critical of this situation and asserted that there should be clear-cut criteria for selection of NGOs to become involved in the education sector program, so that NGOs with expertise could shape the educational agenda in partnership with government and that in the implementation of the program contracts would not be given to dubious NGOs. As one NGO representative put it: *“I am not satisfied with the consultation process. Around 50 NGOs were consulted which are popular in education sector. Of those, all do not have capacity to take part in education sector consultation. There should be criteria of selecting NGOs in education sector partnership. When a quota of contracts was allocated for NGOs, quality has deteriorated and corruption started in the education sector. Strict criteria should be followed in selecting partner NGOs in the education sector by government based on principles of transparency”*.

Our interviews show that prior experience in educational service delivery gives large and well-established NGOs the credentials to become partners of government also in policy formulation. Some NGOs have such expertise (e.g. on disabilities and special education) which Government bodies do not possess and they have contributed to the government education program through their new ideas and concepts. For example, CWIN (Child Workers in Nepal) contributes through advocacy and preparation of policy papers. It is also evident that many NGOs do not have technical skills to take part in policy discussions. In comparison, one interviewee remarked: *“We do not have large and effective NGOs such as BRAC in Bangladesh”*.

## Government-NGO relations

In general, the Government of Nepal acknowledges that NGOs play a vital role in the provision of basic education for disadvantaged groups that under present circumstances are not reached by government schools. Introduction of SWAp through BPEP II and the EFA program implies that NGOs should work in partnership with government in educational development. The Joint Government – Donor Evaluation of BPEP II (DANIDA 2004, 63) found that government became more open to an increased role of NGOs during BPEP II in comparison with BPEP I, as is manifested in the levels of networking and partnership at the national level. Continuation of this trend is evident from the increased government consultation with NGOs in the ongoing EFA program, although at the level of concrete planning, key Government officials and international consultants have mainly interacted with each other to produce the needed documents. The change in the mutual perception of government and NGOs in the positive direction has been facilitated by the match-making role played collectively by the external funding agencies.

One interviewee described the government-NGO relations in the following terms: *“The Ministry of Education and Sports is now more positive concerning NGOs. The plan was good but the delivery mechanism was not reaching the disadvantaged groups. There is a significant gap between plan, implementation and disbursement of funds. The planning and budgeting are not transparent and there are non-existent/ghost programs”*.

Another interviewee also voiced a critical view: *“At district level, local NGOs are likely to be invited to work in collaboration with government. However, their role remains very limited. Government allows controlled dissenting voices. Dialogue takes place for the sake of dialogue. Government allows NGOs to participate in initiatives which bring resources”*. Our interviews also brought up the paradoxical reaction of some NGOs that have tried to make their work visible by remaining completely detached from the government education sector program.

Notwithstanding the progress made towards better relationships, mutual distrust between government and NGOs continues to work as a barrier to enhanced government-NGO partnership. A government official commented, *“Some NGOs are good and some are cheating government. In Nepal, few NGOs have capacity to provide education”*. On their part, NGOs are sceptical of government’s management capacity and transparency.

As there are no clear-cut government policies on funding of NGOs in the education sector, a degree of confusion prevails on this issue. In the present set-up, the central government does not provide any direct funding to NGOs. Instead, the government provides funds to DEOs for program implementation, where NGOs may take part as contractors. As all NGOs are not honest ones and some have a profiteering attitude, this situation offers opportunities for corruption in awarding sub-contracts to NGOs. In the absence of an explicit set of principles to define the credible NGOs, government officials at national and district levels use their discretion to select NGOs as sub-contractors. Due to their connections with government officials, dubious NGOs thus get opportunities to partake in corruption. As an example, an NGO official referred to the involvement of NGOs in Early Childhood Development and claimed that *“Even 10% of the ECD programs are not functioning properly in Nepal due to corruption”*. Another risk related to sub-contracting is that if NGOs receive funding from government sources, the former may become too dependent on government and lose their autonomy as civil society actors.

The expansion of the role of NGOs from educational service delivery towards advocacy and social mobilization creates new kinds of tension between the activist NGOs and government. This is evident in e.g. the following two quotes from our interviews: *“NGOs can play an important role by being critical partners and observers of government in the education sector. NGOs do not necessarily need to agree with government in all aspects of the education sector. As Nepal is a diverse country in terms of geography and ethno-linguistic identities, district/VDC level solution is more appropriate than national level solution”*, and: *“Civil society is the new phase of the NGO framework. There is a danger that they can be used in formation of public opinion and propaganda. It may*

*cause social disharmony. Under the imported NGO framework (e.g. civil society), elite groups are capturing civil society who may not work for people's welfare. They are not always representing the interests of the poor and may in fact perpetuate inequality”.*

### NGOs and educational decentralization

Decentralization is a major strategy of the Government of Nepal to implement the BPEP and EFA programs. BPEP II already advanced an ambitious plan to implement decentralized management of education. The passing of the Local Government Act 1999 has bearings on the planning and delivery mechanisms of BPEP. It has opened ways for educational decentralization through local government bodies at district, village and community levels. This emphasis notwithstanding, district plans are reportedly often made to meet the demands of national planning, rather than to address the concerns of the community and in consultation with stakeholders. An interviewee said: *“There is little or no district level planning in Nepal. Rather, it is a rhetoric which ends up in centralization and patronization at local level by the central level officials. There is little or no scope for local level resource mobilization”.*

Local government bodies in Nepal have limited capacity to plan and implement educational programs. According to one interviewee, *“In the given context of inefficiency of the government mechanism, communities can manage schools but they need outside support. From that point, partnership among communities, schools and NGOs is necessary. We are not talking about NGOs as service providers; we are talking about NGOs as partners. Partnership of community with NGOs can promote school efficiency and build up school capacity to run better”.*

Some NGOs implement innovative approaches to solve educational problems, which represent potentially valuable experiences to be utilized also by government. According to our interviewees, the attitude of lower level government officials towards NGOs is variable: some are positive towards NGOs, as they feel sharing common challenges at the local level, whereas others want to keep NGOs at bay.

### *NGO-NGO cooperation*

Judging on the basis of our interviews, cooperation and mutual coordination among the NGOs that operate in the education sector is quite weak. Even though NGOs are ostensibly non-political actors, a large proportion of the NGOs in Nepal are internally affiliated with political parties. This creates divisions among NGOs which is manifested in the existence of parallel apex bodies of NGOs.

In this kind of a context, introduction of SWAp poses a particular challenge for NGOs. The new kind of partnership expected of NGOs requires cooperation and coordination in formulating policy positions and plans, as well as in the implementation of their activities. In the absence of NGOs capacity to achieve this, government representatives can (with or without reason) dismiss NGO views as representing factional political interests. Equally important is the expectation of the donors supporting the education sector program that there are voices representing the education sector NGOs collectively. One interviewee suggested that *“Donor support may unite NGOs in policy level which may contribute to ‘common NGO voice’ in education sector”*. But not all interviewees regarded a common voice of NGOs as desirable: *“I am sceptical on a single NGO voice. I do not think that it is possible to achieve as one size does not fit all”*.

### *Donor-NGO relations*

Most NGOs in Nepal are funded by INGOs and/or bilateral agencies. Within BPEP and the EFA program, the main donor agencies channel most of their funding through a common basket, whereas none of the INGOs use this channel. Many bi- and multilateral donors also have provisions for direct funding to NGO projects as part of their support to the education sector in Nepal. In the ongoing transition towards local ownership of sector programs donor agencies are in favour of governments owning the national sector program without donors being parties in internal politics. Nevertheless, our interviews

revealed scepticism among Government of Nepal officials that donor agencies nurture NGOs to play against government in policy issues, which leads to the perception that NGOs need to be controlled by government.

Since the introduction of BPEP II, the donors to the basket fund have developed a mechanism to coordinate their efforts through consultations. However, visibility of individual agencies remains an issue as far as their home constituencies are concerned. A sense of competition among donor agencies is occasionally manifested among large bilateral donor agencies. According to one interviewee: *“Donor agencies come with their own agenda and self-interest. Donor visibility remains a strong motivation for donors to support sector programs”*. One NGO representative also commented: *“There is lack of coordination among Northern NGOs and bilateral development cooperation agencies. They work with same goals and appear to have different agendas”*.

The visibility concern and inter-agency competition are factors that influence the relationships of donor agencies with NGOs in Nepal. NGOs are considered as innovative and flexible, and at the same time they are heavily dependent on donor agencies for running their educational projects. By dint of their funding the agencies thus enjoy special leverage on NGOs, whose activities in return give individual visibility to the agencies. A government of Nepal official gave the following view: *“Educational models implemented by NGOs have less to do with local contexts and more to do with imported foreign models. Often needs of people and community are ignored by NGOs. NGOs should be loyal and honest and be accountable to people”*. Another interviewee said: *“NGOs are much dependent on external funding for running their projects as they seldom have their own resources. INGOs contribute to make this dependency. In a true sense, there are 1–2 independent NGOs in Nepal”*.

### NGOs in the context of conflict

A specific condition in Nepal is that, since 1996, a Maoist movement has waged a “revolutionary war” that has caused the death of an estimated number of 14 000 people and displacement of 200 000. While our study is primarily

interested in Nepal and Tanzania as cases within a broader framework of analysis, our interviews also brought up some valuable information on the influence of the Maoist insurgency in the education sector, on which very little is known outside Nepal.

Overall, the conflict has had a significant negative impact on the functioning of the education system and the implementation of BPEP. The insurgents have visited public schools and abducted teachers and students to indoctrinate them with their ideology. Public school teachers have been caught in suspicion, interrogation and violence of both Maoists and government security forces. Many teachers have been killed and many more have been detained. Due to the conflict, educational administration and management teams are pulled back in district headquarters in the affected areas. In remote areas, the Maoist insurgency has caused closure of some public schools for as long as 200 days in a year.

However, the role of Maoists in the education sector is not perceived as only subversive. Several of our interviewees acknowledged that the Maoist movement has had some positive effects on the education sector too. For example: *"In public schools, monitoring system is very bad. In Maoist areas, however, monitoring system has been developed and teachers attend schools in time"*.

The disadvantaged condition of Dalits and of many ethno-linguistic minorities and inaccessible regions prepared fertile ground for the Maoist insurgency in the past. Arguably, the movement can also be considered as part of Nepalese civil society. Educational reform to overcome the rigid hierarchic society is one of the major items on the political agenda of the Maoist movement. According to one interviewee: *"Maoists are closing down private schools which has increased the number of students in public schools unexpectedly"*. At policy level, the Maoist movement is also against community management of schools, which they consider as a way of avoiding educational provision as a government responsibility.

All the NGO representatives as well as government officials interviewed in Nepal argued that primary education should be a responsibility of the state.

At the same time, many of them also questioned the political commitment and capacity of government to ensure the achievement of the EFA goal by 2015. Actually, government has allowed some NGOs to work in order to rescue a collapsing education system in the Maoist-controlled areas where government education officials do not have access. One government official commented: *“We try to strengthen partnerships with them. In insurgency areas, NGOs provide alternative options for education. It is a substantial support in delivery of educational services”*. NGO workers meet the Maoists on the ground and, being pragmatists, they consult and accommodate rebel demands on education, such as training teachers on the Maoist curriculum. On their part, the Maoists have accepted a role for NGOs in conflict-affected areas as “lesser evils than government”, to prevent a total collapse of the education system. Maoists have asked NGOs to register under their administration so that these are then allowed to operate.

In 2005, all the major political forces in Nepal, including the Maoists, joined to force the King to hand over executive power to the national parliament. After the new national general elections, Nepal will see a new constitution. The 2006 events of signing a peace accord and inclusion of the Maoists in the interim national government could have far-reaching impact on educational development in Nepal, including what is seen as a proper role for the NGOs in the future.

## Views of stakeholders on the future role of NGOs

The findings and interpretations presented above show how the role of NGOs in the education sector in Nepal has been challenged by the introduction of SWAp since the mid-90s. The previous, uncoordinated NGO projects have increasingly come to appear questionable, but at the same time NGOs have gained in potential to influence the shaping of the BPEP and EFA programs, in dialogue with government.

This section concludes the case study on Nepal by summarizing the views of our interviewees concerning the future role of NGOs in the education sector.



The recommendation-type of statements presented in this section come from the interviewees – the authors' own recommendations will be presented in the last section of this chapter.

The traditional notion of the role of NGOs as “package providers” is no longer valid in the sector program context. At the level of program implementation, there is a need for increased coordination and complementarities among NGOs, as well as between NGOs and government. NGOs should be regarded and operate as partners of government and local government bodies and communities to implement plans at the local level. Since the introduction of BPEP, much improvement in this respect has already been noted.

In the context of decentralization, there is a need for capacity-building of local government institutions so that they would be better able to plan and manage education. The expertise of NGOs in participatory planning and management can be beneficially used by communities and schools. One interviewee said: *“District Education Officers cannot even monitor one third of schools at district level. Large NGOs should be mobilized by government to make public schools work and government should play the role of regulator. NGOs can also contribute to the quality control issue together with government by playing the role as monitors”*. National and local NGOs, together with INGOs and donor agencies, can provide training and other technical assistance to school staff and community members.

In the perspective of NGOs and their funding agencies, capacity-building of NGOs through external support could also be justified in the interest of fostering the civil society role of NGOs in the education sector and as a contribution to bringing the voices of disadvantaged groups to bear on educational policy-making, planning and management. However, government is more interested to engage NGOs in service delivery than in consultation that is linked to NGO-advocacy and social mobilization. The donor agencies' existing practice of parallel funding, which uses both the sector program channel and direct funding to NGOs, is obviously a complicated situation against the donor agencies' insistence on national ownership as the foundation to their sector program support. Nepalese NGOs can thus appear as more

accountable to the INGOs and other donor agencies than to their constituent and beneficiary groups or the national government. A confounding factor that many interviewees commented on is the existence of dubious NGOs and corruption in the education sector.

As a possible way forward, government officials suggested that external support to NGOs should come through the basket fund in order to make NGO activities more transparent. In a future ideal situation, where the basket fund would be replaced by sectoral (or general) budget support, this kind of an arrangement would become a system of channeling external funding to Nepalese NGOs through the Government of Nepal. Also some NGOs representatives advocated at least partial government funding of NGOs. On the other hand, INGOs expressed hesitation to providing funds to the government, due to perceived lack of government's capacity in financial management: *"Basket funding is due to lack of transparency. We do not believe much in government because, in the name of security and development, money may go to anywhere"*.

Some NGO representatives also criticized the existing competition between NGOs for external funding and suggested developing a joint fund for NGOs working in the education sector at district level. An NGO official stated: *"It is a pity that NGOs depend on INGOs and local communities instead of government for their funding"*. However, a different view was also presented: *"If NGOs receive government funds for running their educational programs, they may become like government agency. NGOs should be more rooted in community. If NGOs are too much dependent on donor agencies and government, their virtues will be lost. There is a need for NGOs to become inward-looking and they should be responsible for raising their own funds"*.

## Case study on Tanzania

### Description of the Primary Education Development Plan

Until the 1990s, Tanzania was a one-party state, ruled by the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party since its independence. With the transition into multiparty democracy, CCM has remained the governing party. During the period of its socialist experiment, Tanzania achieved remarkable progress in school enrolment. Tanzania began its quest for Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1967, inspired by President Nyerere's policy of African Socialism and Self-reliance. At the height of this effort, in 1980, a primary level gross enrollment ratio (GER) of 98% had been achieved and gender differences in primary education were virtually eliminated (Alubisia 2005, 23).

However, since the 1980s the conditions stipulated by the Structural Adjustment Program and lack of domestic resources had a huge negative impact on primary education in Tanzania. Fees were introduced in primary schooling and the demand for education weakened. From the peak of 98% in 1980, the primary level GER dropped to 71% in 1988. Since 1990 Tanzania has been a signatory of the EFA declaration. Throughout the post-independence period, Tanzania has received voluminous support from external funding agencies.

To address the problem of parallel projects and to increase government ownership in the education sector, the Government of Tanzania (GoT), with the support of its development partners, introduced the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) in 2000. This program was conceived within the framework defined by the GoT Education and Training Policy document, adopted in 1995. The first part of the sector program to become operational was the Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP). The initial phase of PEDP has covered the period 2002–2006. The main objectives of PEDP were enrolment expansion, improvement of the quality of education and strengthening management capacity of public schools. Recent data indicate a rise in the Net Enrolment Ratio from 80.7% in 2002 to 96.1% in 2006 (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training 2006, 15). This achievement

notwithstanding, many children from poor households, particularly girls, and children from nomadic background are deprived of even basic education, and a group which is nearly systematically left outside primary schools is the disabled children. HIV/AIDS has a devastating impact on education sector, due to death of teachers and children's parents (Rajani 2003, 2–3).

The Government of Tanzania (GoT) has taken a series of measures to enroll and retain all children in primary schools. School fees and all other mandatory contributions were abolished in 2002 as part of implementing PEDP I. GoT also initiated a scholarship program to pay for the education of disadvantaged children, including HIV/AIDS orphans. To ensure basic education for disadvantaged groups, PEDP gives attention to non-formal education programs for out-of-school children and adolescents. The PEDP I document defined the relations between non-formal and formal education in the following terms: “The guiding principle in these education initiatives will be that every effort will be made to induct children into the mainstream, formal provision. This means that the strategies for the complementary education programs are designed for the short-to-medium term only” (Government of the United Republic of Tanzania 2001, 8).

The second phase of PEDP has been planned for the years 2007–2011 and will cover pre-primary and primary education, non-formal education for out-of-school children, special provision for children with disabilities, and adult literacy. Another sub-sector within the ESDP framework that recently became operational is the Secondary Education Development Plan (SEDP), which is being implemented since 2005. An important step towards a genuine sector-wide approach was the first Education Sector Review, organized in February 2006. Revision of the ETP and ESDP documents is currently underway and the aim is to integrate all sub-sectoral programs (also including vocational and higher education) into one comprehensive sector plan.

The Government of Tanzania has readily accepted the new modality of sector program support. Under the PEDP I arrangement, funding came through a combination of donor-specific project disbursement, pooled funding (equivalent to the concept of “basket funding” used in i.e. Nepal) to

the education sector program and general budget support. The main donors to PEDP are Canada, EU, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the World Bank. NGOs have been supported through project funding which remains outside the sector program framework.

## **Involvement of NGOs in PEDP**

### *Areas of NGO participation*

In Tanzania, the state has played a dominant role in national development in general and the education sector in particular. However, as part of the process of democratization since the mid-1990s, NGOs have been allowed to play a larger role. Whereas in 1993 there were a total of 224 registered NGOs in Tanzania, in 2002 their number was estimated at around 8000 (Kontinen 2007, 65). During the same period, the number of NGOs operating in the education sector has increased significantly. The Tanzania Education Network (TEN/MET), an apex body of Tanzanian educational NGOs, has a reported membership of 171 organizations, including church-based organizations, regional and local NGOs, large national NGOs, INGOs and the Teachers' Union.

As regards provision of basic education, NGOs in Tanzania pursue a variety of methods to increase school enrollment and retention of disadvantaged children. Their work is mainly small scale and innovative in nature and many of them receive foreign funding (Carr-Hill & Ndalichako 2005, 2). In the basic education sub-sector, the majority of the NGOs are secular, whereas in post-primary education there is a strong presence of faith-based NGOs and private institutions that complement the relatively modest provision by Government at this level (Kontinen op.cit., 67). The faith-based NGOs have a long history in Tanzania, as in Sub-Saharan Africa more generally.

The PEDP I program document mentioned the importance of cooperation among Local Government Agencies, NGOs and communities to reach the program goals by opening special non-formal education centers or by

using existing school facilities. This document also provided a multifaceted definition of the role of NGOs, which are expected to:

1. Participate effectively in planning, implementation and monitoring activities at all levels that support the PEDP and ESDP objectives.
2. Participate as a joint stakeholder in the annual ESDP process of reviewing the education sector, including the primary and non-formal education programs.
3. Contribute their experience and knowledge, as well as human, financial, technical, and material resources to the improvement and provision of primary education.
4. Share information with, and facilitate meaningful community participation in primary and non-formal education.
5. Effectively collect and communicate educational information from and to schools, communities, government, and other stakeholders.
6. Conduct education policy analysis and advocacy.

During the implementation of PEDP I some NGOs have made a significant contribution to construction of classrooms, provision of furniture and books, and training of teachers and school principals. Parallel to this, some NGOs have been active in advocacy and social mobilization in the education sector. As indicated by the comparative review by Lexow (op.cit.) and by our case study on Nepal, the presence of NGOs in service delivery is a key factor in building up rapport between NGOs and government. Due to the short time span between the upsurge of NGO activities in Tanzania and the introduction of PEDP I, the activist NGOs have little or no prior experience in educational service delivery in the basic education sub-sector. The most prominent among these NGOs are Maarifa ni Ufunguo and Haki Elimu (HE). Maarifa has conducted research on the impact of fees on school attendance of children from poor households. The research results and consequent debates contributed to the waiver of fees in public schools in Tanzania. Similarly, the advocacy and research activities of HE have been a strong critical voice in education policy issues in Tanzania. In particular, its use of mass media has stimulated

debate on current issues of primary education for the disadvantaged groups in Tanzania. Another example of NGO influence on policy is that in the original document of PEDP I there was no mention of special needs education, but subsequent efforts of some NGOs contributed to incorporation of special education issues within PEDP II.

### *Basis for NGO involvement*

Until the end of 1990s, GoT denied NGOs the right to organize under an umbrella organization and argued that it was not within the mandate of NGOs to engage in such activities. More recently, NGOs officials have participated in MOEVT consultative meetings, task forces and working groups of PEDP I through their umbrella organization TEN/MET.

In the PEDP I process, TEN/MET has served as a bridge between educational NGOs and government through an arrangement where GoT asks TEN/MET to select NGOs to participate in specific areas of consultation. The umbrella organization then selects the participating NGOs on the basis of areas of specialization of TEN/MET members. This has created resentment among those NGOs which are not taken on board in the consultation process. As there are also a large number of educational NGOs which are not members of TEN/MET, the question remains to what extent TEN/MET represents the educational NGOs of Tanzania as a whole. As an interviewee of a TEN/MET member NGO stated: *“There are over 400 educational NGOs in Tanzania and TEN/MET has a paid membership of 80 educational NGOs only. When it is invited to represent the NGOs in education sector with government, does it speak for 80 or 400 NGOs?”*

Many of our interviewees described NGO involvement in consultation as favourable to large NGOs based in Dar es Salaam, to the disadvantage of grassroots NGOs. Due to the short history of NGO participation in development in Tanzania, most of the NGOs are run by their leaders' charisma rather than through building impersonal organizations. NGO representatives also stated that although educational NGOs are consulted to certain extent

through TEN/MET, the final policy documents often do not incorporate the inputs of grassroots NGOs. In addition, the results of research undertaken by NGOs are disseminated in a haphazard manner and there is no formal forum in which these can be presented. Nevertheless, the image of some large NGOs in the education sector has in recent years become visible due to their new ideas, research and watchdog role vis-à-vis PEDP. In 2006, the quota for NGOs in the annual education sector consultation was reduced from 23 to 10, after government's conflict with the HakiElimu, which will be analyzed in more detail in the next section of this chapter.

### *Government-NGO relations*

The overall government-NGO relationship in Tanzania is formally defined by the Non-Governmental Organizations Act (2002), which requires NGOs to be registered with government. In case of violation of the Act, NGOs are under threat of penalties including deregistration. In the world of development projects, formal registration provides NGOs the legitimacy they need in seeking funding from sources abroad for their project proposals. But in the sector program context, existence of formal registration rules is insufficient for guiding the forms and substance of Government-NGO partnership.

In the absence of explicit "rules of the game", the relations of the Government of Tanzania with NGOs are based on government's discretion, which again is conditioned by the complex interlinkage between government's assertion to control over national development, its declared commitment for democratic governance and its dependency on international donor agencies, which have expectations of their own concerning the role of NGOs. Due to the history of one-party rule in Tanzania, the political climate has not been very supportive of pluralism even under formal democratic governance. One NGO interviewee termed this phenomenon as "centralistic hangover". As a manifestation of this legacy, it is evident that government officials in general have a skeptical attitude towards an advocacy and social mobilization role of NGOs in the education sector. For example, some interviewees expressed their dissatisfaction with



NGOs tracking public expenditure of government. Some government officials also deplored that NGOs have been given too much space in the consultation process with government in the education sector. They perceived that the role of NGOs should be confined to providing direct logistical support to schools and training for teachers and other staff to improve the quality of education.

Government officials also accuse NGOs of being non-representative and non-transparent. Their democratic representativeness is questioned on the premise that NGOs have a very small membership base. As government is elected by popular vote under the formal democratic system, many government officials question the legitimacy of NGOs to contest government policy in the first place. In contrast to representative government, NGOs are perceived as pressure groups which are not accountable to a constituency, but rather towards their external funding agencies whose priorities can then override local needs and realities. With respect to transparency of NGOs in the utilization of their funds, Government officials point out the existence of “ghost NGOs” and “briefcase NGOs” which exist only on paper but receive foreign funds. An interviewee described the weaknesses of NGOs in the following terms: *“The problem of NGOs in Africa is that NGOs are poverty-driven in this continent. Many NGOs use poor people for serving their own interest”*. This picture is confounded further by the fact that some NGOs are known to be established and operated by individuals who are also civil servants.

The general NGO perspective emerging from our interviews is markedly different from the Government perspective. NGOs which have expertise in the education sector are critical of government because of the latter’s reluctance to provide them space. An NGO representative said: *“If government agencies are transparent, they should not feel threatened and should allow us to monitor their role”*, and another one suggested: *“Government is not ready for change. The mindset of government officials should be changed so it becomes conducive to partnership with other actors”*. Several of our interviewees outside GoT accused government of employing “ambiguity” as a conscious policy in its relations to NGOs. Government consultation with NGOs was also characterized as “rubberstamping” its policies and plans to conform to donors’ expectations.

The contested role of HakiElimu, a major Tanzanian NGO established in 2001 and funded by a group of external agencies, has become a test more broadly of the role of NGO activities in the education sector in Tanzania. The contribution of HE in the education sector through policy dialogue with government has been widely acknowledged by NGOs, government and donor community alike. Previously, HE had close collaboration with government and MOEVT officials listened to its suggestions concerning PEDP I.

More recent events in the relationship between GoT and HE case are an extreme example of breakdown of communication between government and an NGO. Government officials accused HE of being hyper-critical and confrontational with government to gain easy visibility and a leadership role within the NGO community. HE was also blamed for creating a “personality cult” rather than operating as a professional NGO. One MOEVT official stated: *“Being critical to government is a typical HakiElimu approach. It is getting its fuels from development partners. Donors fund and use HakiElimu”*. A sizable number of interviewees representing NGOs and donor agencies expressed their opinion by stating that HE did raise its “right concerns” on PEDP I at a “wrong time”, as it brought a negative picture of PEDP I, including accusations of corruption in the education sector, into the public sphere when the ruling CCM party was using PEDP as its success story in its election campaign.

In late 2005, GoT made the decision to prohibit or constrain HE from undertaking and publishing research and distributing publications to schools, appearing in the media, and “representing civil society in education dialogue forums with Government” (quoted from [www.hakielimu.org](http://www.hakielimu.org)). The legality of Government’s reaction was questioned by some commentators also outside HE, but others saw HE as having gone too far in its confrontational mode of operation. Such a decision was definitely a demonstration of autonomy from GoT vis-à-vis the donor agencies that provided financial support to HE.

At the height of the conflict with HE, GoT reduced the quota for NGOs participating in education sector review meeting of February 2006 from 23 to 10. In protest to the perceived squeezing of the role of NGOs in the education sector, TEN/MET collectively boycotted the Education Sector Review

meeting in 2006. However, several members of TEN/MET ignored the decision of the apex body and participated in this consultative meeting with government in their individual capacity. Several interviewees commented that there should have been more consultation within TEN/MET before taking the boycott decision on behalf of the umbrella organization. According to one interviewee, *“It was an overreaction on part of TEN/MET – as dialogue and partnership is a process which requires time”*.

In 2006, when the interviews for this study were carried out, the tussle between GoT and NGOs was ongoing and limited the potential role of NGOs in education sector development. But soon after our interviews, high-level contact between GoT and HE led to resolving the situation: in February 2007 a meeting between the Prime Minister and HE representatives led to an agreement that canceled the restrictions imposed on HE activities, and in addition stipulated that “HakiElimu and Government officers will share information and maintain close and efficient communication on matters of mutual interest” (quoted from [www.hakielimu.org](http://www.hakielimu.org)).

### *NGOs and educational decentralization*

As part of the broader reform process of decentralization in the public sector, the Government of Tanzania has given more responsibilities in educational management to local government agencies, particularly at district level, and to school management committees. These newly created committees are expected to prepare and implement “whole school development plans”, including budgeting and financial management.

In the view of several interviewees, local government bodies and communities are mostly unprepared to assume the role expected of them in the context of decentralization. In many cases, committee members do not possess even basic literacy themselves, let alone knowledge and skills needed to participate in planning and management of education. The traditional respect for authority is strong in Tanzania, which makes it easier for local prominent people to enter school committees and manipulate them. The committee chairpersons tend

to be affiliated with the ruling party at the grassroots level. As an example, one interviewee commented: *“Parents and community members do not have much capacity to participate effectively in school committees. Different views are not reflected in those committees. Usually one person sets the agenda”*. Another interviewee said: *“The school committees have weak capacity in handling day-to-day affairs. Members of the committees have received some training and still the capacity is not sufficient. The elected village government leaders are chairmen of the committees. There are risks of embezzlements because of lack of training and accountability of members”*.

At the village and school level, some NGOs have contributed to primary education development in school construction and provision of desks and books. NGOs have also been involved in providing training and advisory support to district education offices and school committees, in order to increase their capacity. But it is also apparent that many local government officials lack trust in NGOs, perceiving these as organizations with foreign funding which come to “police on them”. There is also resistance to the idea of taking NGOs on board in school level planning.

### *NGO-NGO cooperation*

NGOs in Tanzania are not a cohesive entity, but rather a diverse group with different interests and expectations. There are varieties of NGOs, based on their geographical coverage, secular/religious worldviews and genuine vs. opportunistic commitment to education sector development. Competition among NGOs for foreign funding is an additional cause of fragmentation among NGOs. The existence and operation of the umbrella organization of education sector NGOs, TEN/MET, should be seen in this context.

The question, to what extent TEN/MET represents the educational NGOs in Tanzania, has already been mentioned in an earlier section of this chapter. This issue has two aspects. First, many of the educational NGOs remain outside this network. Non-members contest the role of the apex body as representative of all NGOs in the education sector: *“TEN/MET is made*

*gatekeeper of NGOs, which role in fact it should not play. Those NGOs which are not members of TEN/MET, do not consider it as their mouthpiece*". The second aspect is the mode of cooperation and decision-making within TEN/MET, on which the views of our interviewees diverged.

Some of the interviewees characterized the NGO-NGO cooperation that is manifested in TEN/MET as exemplary. For instance: *"NGOs have a stronger voice in the education sector due to common agreement among themselves. Open communication and dialogue among NGOs has contributed to this development. It helps NGOs to go in line with government program and make government accountable"*. To disseminate information among its members, TEN/MET uses available means of communication, including a newsletter, e-mail and a focal point structure, where different NGOs assume a coordinating role within the network for specific thematic areas. However, due to lack of access to information technology, the dissemination and sharing of information among NGOs in Tanzania remains weak.

In our interviews, the power relationship between large national NGOs and small NGOs within TEN/MET came across as a problematic issue. As already mentioned, TEN/MET has assumed a gatekeeper role in the selection of NGOs for consultation with government. These decisions are made taking into account areas of NGO specializations and on a principle of consensus. However, our interviews revealed that in this constellation, the voices of small NGOs are often ignored by the large and powerful NGOs, which are also linked to international NGO networks, including the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and the African Network Coalition on Education for All (ANCEFA).<sup>3</sup> The result is frustration and resentment among the smaller NGOs. One of our interviewees said: *"Participation of NGOs in consultation is*

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<sup>3</sup> In their study of the PRSP process in Tanzania, Gould and Ojanen present the following critical characterization of some Tanzanian NGOs: "these well-resourced, highly professional exponents of 'global civil society' have managed, by entering into an opportunistic albeit tense alliance with public bi- and multilateral aid agencies, to co-opt the narrow political space precariously occupied by those few domestic actors which exhibit markings of incipient social movements" (Gould & Ojanen, 2003, 25; see also Shivji 2004).

*arbitrary. TEN/MET selection of NGOs is driven by a political agenda within the umbrella organization. Mainly the large NGOs dominate TEN/MET". Another NGO representative criticized the internal decision-making within TEN/MET by stating: "We have many organizations within TEN/MET which wanted to participate in Education Sector Review meeting of 2006. Two or three NGOs said no to that proposition and it was decided that we will not participate in the meeting".*

### *Donor-NGO relations*

The major donors involved in the education sector in Tanzania include bilateral and multilateral agencies, as well as INGOs. With bi- and multilateral agencies moving from the project mode towards sector program support and general budget support, INGOs are increasingly becoming the sole sources of funding of local NGOs. As the donor agencies do not have a clear policy on supporting NGOs in the sector program context, their engagement with NGOs is provisional and tends to deal with individual NGOs on a case by case basis. Under the new modality of aid, many NGOs perceive that donor agencies are abandoning them by focusing on their partnership with government. Counter to this perception is the fact that donor agencies are indirectly supporting NGOs by requesting involvement of NGOs in policy dialogue and planning and by putting leverage on government policies in issues where NGOs have experience and expertise (such as education of nomadic children, disabled and children affected by HIV/AIDS).

Local NGOs compete among themselves to attract donor funding and have diverse approaches to serving the educational needs of disadvantaged children. The strong dependency of NGOs on donor agencies induces them to formulate their plans in a way that fits with particular agendas of educational development on the donor side. An interviewee from an NGO described the donor-NGO relationship in Tanzania as follows: *"Each donor agency has its particular interest. As a result of our donor-dependency, actual needs of communities are often ignored in policy-making and its implementation. Donors*

*help NGOs to build up capacity in policy formulation and its implementation. When donors change their policies and areas of priorities, the policies and priorities of NGOs also change*". This problem is attenuated by the fact that donor agencies, including INGOs, in most cases do not have a long-term commitment for individual NGO projects, but funding decisions are made annually and support to a particular NGO project is short-lived. Because of their urge to show effects of their operations to their home constituencies, donor agencies are concerned with "aid visibility", whereas Tanzanian NGOs generally lack strategic planning in their relationship with donor agencies.

Apart from sector-specific aims, most of the donor agencies also support NGO activities in pursuit of the overall goal of building up civil society. This support includes both projects decided on at headquarters and small funds for NGO support that exist in the Embassies of many donor countries in Tanzania. Some bilateral agencies are also moving towards strategic partnership with selected Tanzanian NGOs. The underlying aim is to broaden the space for NGOs to hold government accountable on development issues.

## Views of stakeholders on the future role of NGOs

On the basis of the interviews, it is evident that the role of NGOs in the education sector of Tanzania has changed considerably since the 1990s. Initially, NGOs received support from international donor agencies under the project mode, with little mutual coordination and linkage to Government policies and plans. After the introduction of the sector program, donor agencies have exercised leverage on government to involve NGOs in PEDP consultations. The dominant attitude on the government side can be characterized as "reluctant partnership" towards NGOs, reflecting both the legacy of State-led, centralistic development efforts and lack of NGO credentials gained in educational service delivery.

This section concludes the case study on Tanzania by summarizing the views of our interviewees concerning the future role of NGOs in the education sector. The recommendation-type of statements presented in this section come

from the interviewees – the authors' own recommendations will be presented in the last section of this chapter.

The six-point list that was quoted from the PEDP I document in an earlier section of this article (p. 86) delineated an ideal role for NGOs in the sector program context. As our findings have shown, the record of performance in this role is variable. Clearly some NGOs have been active in gathering information and conducting policy analysis, and have gained both visibility and influence on this basis. At the same time, there are divergent views on what would be a proper consultative role of for the NGOs as a whole in the PEDP process, as well as on the representativeness of the existing gatekeeping arrangement between Government and TEN/MET. As NGOs have already provided feedback to government to strengthen PEDP II, some of our interviewees favored a continued prominent role of NGOs in advocacy and policy-related research in the education sector. On their part, Government officials would prefer to avoid NGO scrutiny of educational policies and program implementation and to instead strengthen monitoring and controlling of NGO spending and behavior.

In our interviews, both NGO and donor representatives were critical of the lack of national policy guidelines concerning the role of NGOs and the consequently large discretionary authority of government officials in dealing with NGOs. More specifically, with reference to the conflict over HakiElimu, some representatives of NGOs, government and donor agencies called for restraint on both sides of this conflict and openness for understanding each other's points of view. Such a position is also supported by an earlier External Evaluation Report of HakiElimu which voiced concern over a risk of conflict escalation between HE and Government (Hoppers, Lushakuzi & Dachi 2004).

As the life-time of most NGOs in the education sector in Tanzania is still very short, such NGOs are going through a trial and error process. A number of interviewees opined that, though there are nationally known and capable NGOs in Tanzania, a large number of NGOs do not have sufficient technical capacity to play a meaningful role in the PEDP context as service



providers and/or civil society actors. As a remedy to the capacity problem of NGOs, several interviewees proposed that INGOs and other donor agencies should provide technical assistance and training, starting from explanation of SWAp principles and the content of the sector program. At the same time, it was pointed out that the lack of predictability of funding from donor agencies limits the possibilities of NGOs to pursue long-term capacity development.

The interviewees presented diverging arguments on future funding of NGOs from either government or donor agencies. Some NGO representatives suggested that government should earmark funds within PEDP for NGOs. The rationale of such funding is based on the premise that it would fill educational needs of disadvantaged groups, complementary to provision by Government, and would also encourage educational innovation. One interviewee formulated the proposal in the following terms: *“From the national budget, government should give money to NGOs to work in various sectors. The modalities of such collaboration should be open for debate. A certain percentage of government budget should be given to NGOs based on fairness and consultation”*.

The same proposal was received from government officials interviewed, but with a different justification. One official of MOEVT pointed out that *“Local NGOs are supported by external funding. They are not open with external funding. There is a need for mechanism of transparency. If they work with us, we can ensure transparency by asking about their budget”*. Another official suggested that *“Support to NGOs should go through the Ministry of Finance. Then we can know where the funding is going and can follow. They (NGOs) never reveal that”*.

An alternative proposal was put forth by some NGOs and donor agency representatives, calling for donor agencies to support NGOs by initiating a “joint civil society fund”. The justification given was that this would help NGOs preserve their characteristics as civil society actors autonomous from government. Whether this is sufficient to justify what government would be inclined to see as “externally funded watchdogs”, is a question that the interviews did not answer.

Yet another type of vision, suggested by several interviewees, called for NGOs to make themselves sustainable by initiating income-generating ventures. In the words of one interviewee: *“In America, NGOs try to fill the gap with contribution of wealthy sections of society. We cannot eradicate poverty as long as NGOs do not have self-finance and self-honor”*.

## Comparative analysis

The first chapter of this article recorded our understanding of the issues related to the role of NGOs in the context of education sector development programs, based on our review of research literature and documents. In this comparative chapter our aim is to combine this understanding with what can be learnt from the case studies of Nepal and Tanzania. The resulting picture partly confirms the tentative conclusions presented in the first chapter, with added nuances from the two country cases, but the case studies have also led to challenging our previous understanding. A difficulty that inevitably remains is the balancing between generalizations beyond the conditions of Nepal and Tanzania, on the one hand, and insights that relate to the specific features of these countries, on the other.

### *Involvement of NGOs in the education sector*

In both Nepal and Tanzania there are a variety of NGOs in terms of their ideological background and developmental orientation, scale of activities, capacity and maturity. In Nepal, as in many other developing countries, some NGOs have been working for decades in providing education for disadvantaged groups. Beginning in the 1990s and as part of the broader process of democratization, the number of NGOs operating in the education sector has proliferated. Recently, government has allowed NGOs to also become involved in formal primary schooling, alongside their traditional role in non-formal education. Some Nepalese NGOs have taken the new role of

advocacy and policy dialogue, with encouragement and financial support from donor agencies. The same trends are found in Tanzania, but there the amount and length of experience that NGOs possess in educational provision – if any – is typically less than in Nepal.

In both countries NGOs have pioneered educational innovation on a small scale and stimulated wider debate on issues of education for disadvantaged groups. The research work of major NGOs on EFA matters has also been prominent in Tanzania and has influenced Government policy (notably in abolishing school fees and in special needs education), whereas in Nepal there is a handful of NGOs conducting research on EFA matters and none are as active as HakiElimu and Maarifa ni Ufunguo in Tanzania.

Another dimension is the differentiation between the roles of NGOs in service delivery in the two countries. In Nepal, the role of NGOs in non-formal basic education is more prominent and socially acceptable as an alternative to formal primary schooling, whereas Tanzania has a post-independence tradition of “equal educational opportunity” (at the rhetorical level, but to a significant degree also in reality). In our interpretation, this difference is related to the degree of social stratification and the prevailing cultural values/political ideologies: in Nepal, provision of NFE for the untouchable and lower caste groups and ethnic minorities is generally considered acceptable, whereas in Tanzania the society is more egalitarian and the state is expected to act as provider for all its citizens. In this respect, we would also argue that there are possibilities to generalize from Nepal to South Asia and from Tanzania to Sub-Saharan Africa.

### *Government-NGO relationship*

With their commitment to the EFA goal, the Governments of Nepal and Tanzania, as well as many other developing country governments, need to accept NGOs as partners, in order to reach the most disadvantaged population groups. In the sector program context, NGOs are expected to supplement the role of government and align their activities with the framework defined by

the ESDP. In the absence of clear government policy on the role of NGOs in this context, their role remains vague and negotiable. The ownership position of government in the sector program gives government discretionary authority both in selecting the NGO partners that are invited to participate in the sector program consultations and in awarding contracts to selected NGOs in program implementation.

The findings of our case studies show governments to be more favorable to NGOs playing a role as service providers than as critics of government policies<sup>4</sup>. In addition, NGOs with a good track record in educational service delivery for disadvantaged population groups have more legitimacy and more chances to become involved in consultation with government. And in conditions where NGOs participate in provision of basic education within the sector program framework, they cannot become overly critical without risking the partnership with government at practical level. Conversely, NGOs that are active in advocacy and social mobilization without prior experience in educational service delivery are regarded with suspicion by government. In Nepal these factors have led to a better overall understanding and relationship between government and NGOs than is the case in Tanzania. At the macro-level it is also evident that the government-NGO relationship is conditioned by the attitude of the government towards democratization in society at large and by its level of dependency on donor agencies, which have played a matchmaking role between a reluctant government and willing NGOs.

Government consultation with NGOs has increased over time in both Nepal and Tanzania. In both countries, technical capacity and personal contacts play an important role in getting a place for NGOs in national consultations, whereas outspoken criticism of government is likely to be a hindrance to inclusion of the critical NGOs in the consultation process, which some stakeholders describe as ritualistic rubberstamping. NGOs also face criticism from government officials because of their lack of membership base

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<sup>4</sup> This finding is in accordance with the results of a recent large-scale study, commissioned by the Commonwealth Education Fund, that interviewed a total of 529 representatives of Southern governments, donor agencies and NGOs (Tomlinson 2007).

and non-representative nature, as compared with elected national and local government bodies. Furthermore, there are allegations of corruption among NGOs. In the ESDP sub-contracting arrangements, government officials may use nepotism or favoritism in selection of NGOs for awarding contracts and may also themselves create “pocket NGOs” or “family NGOs” to manipulate and benefit from the process. A situation where both sides are suspected of lack of transparency is obviously not conducive to development of an open and healthy partnership.

The chosen partner NGOs of government are given a gate-keeping role as ostensibly representing the NGOs as a whole. In Tanzania, such a role is performed by the apex body of educational NGOs, TEN/MET. This arrangement enables the Tanzanian educational NGOs to speak in a “single voice”. However, within this mechanism, large national NGOs are the clear winners at the cost of small and grassroots NGOs. Ironically, the gate-keeper role of TEN/MET thus also creates division among NGOs. In Nepal, there are allegations that NGOs are divided into many groups on political party lines. As they also compete with each other for foreign funding, they could hardly unite themselves to speak in a single voice.

One of the major goals of donor agencies in supporting Southern NGOs is to contribute to building of civil society and thus giving voice for disadvantaged groups in policy dialogue with government and in monitoring the performance of the latter. In this context, activities of NGOs in advocacy and social mobilization are generally considered by Government officials as unwanted “policing” over government policies and programs. The HakiElimu issue in Tanzania is an example of a troubled relationship between government and a major NGO which is supported by donor agencies to play a “watchdog” role vis-à-vis the Government of Tanzania.

Currently, governments of Nepal and Tanzania are taking steps to implement community-based planning and management of schools. However, communities have little capacity to effectively play such a role. Formation of school committees under the radical decentralization plans in both countries takes place within the local power structures and the consequent barriers to

genuine participation at grassroots level. In this context, NGOs with their experience in making education relevant for disadvantaged groups have a potential role in making local government bodies more responsive to the needs of people. Among the NGOs there is also potential to contribute to school level planning and management by training members of community and school teachers.

### *Future role of and support to NGOs*

It is evident from the interviews of donor agency representatives that support to NGOs in the project mode will continue in the foreseeable future in conditions where government-led education sector programs cannot incorporate disadvantaged groups into mainstream basic education. We can thus expect that in many developing countries the role of NGOs in educational provision will remain relevant even under ESDPs. At the same time, it is also clear that NGOs need to cope with the tension between their traditional mode of operation and the principles and practices of the sector program. This is a formidable challenge and it is safe to predict that in the process of change some of the existing NGOs will survive, with a renewed agenda and a changed mode of operation, while others will not find a meaningful role nor continue to receive funding and hence will fade away. The surviving NGOs are likely to possess a strategic vision of their contribution to national education sector development. NGOs also have to strike a balance between their embeddedness in community and the wider national context, on the one hand, and their dependence on donor agencies, on the other. To mitigate the ambiguity of the role of NGOs, there is an urgent need for a clear policy on the part of governments on their relations with NGOs.

Under existing ESDP arrangements, the funding of Southern NGOs continues to come mainly from bilateral donors and international NGOs. The general question for the future is: what form of partnership should there be between government and national/local NGOs in the education sector – bearing in mind that in the countries with ESDPs there are also at least incipient

institutions of formal representative democracy? A subsequent question then is, how – if at all – can direct financial support from external funding agencies to Southern NGOs in developing countries be justified, against the alternative that the status of NGOs be redefined as implementers of designated parts of the ESDP that receive their funding through the sector program channels? At a time when bi- and multilaterally funded projects with governments of developing countries are gradually being phased out, direct external funding to NGOs (with or without using the term “watchdogs”) can easily be seen as an indication of mistrust towards the partner government’s commitment to poverty reduction and to building institutions of representative democracy. An alternative view is that donor agencies have a constructive mediating role to play in creating a healthy relationship between government and NGOs. In order to be able to play such a role, donor agencies need to clarify their policies on supporting NGOs alongside their provision of sector program support.

Our fieldwork has brought up arguments and counterarguments on external funding of NGOs in the sector program context. The view that such funding to NGOs should go through the Ministry of Education or Finance (or an interim basket/pool fund arrangement) is based on the logic that NGOs play a complementary role in government-led implementation of the sector program, and also that in such an arrangement government would be in a position to control the transparency of NGOs in their spending. Critics of this kind of an arrangement point out the risk of NGOs being reduced to sub-contractors of the government bureaucracy. An attendant risk is corruption in the form of allocating government contracts to NGOs which lack commitment and/or capacity to really implement the programs. There clearly is a need for a mechanism to perform credibility checking of NGOs. In the current set-up this is something that the external funding agencies are mandated to do insofar as they deal with Southern NGOs directly. But in the sector program context, there should be a tripartite arrangement, where also the national government and civil society have a voice. Evidently, progress in this direction is largely conditional on curtailing corruption and improvement of transparency in society at large.

At a more practical level, at least the following options for future funding of Southern NGOs in the sector program context can be discerned:

- 1) Continued external funding directly to individual NGOs. The justifications for this option – that such support secures attention to the most disadvantaged population groups and contributes to building of civil society – are problematic in the sector program context.
- 2) Provision of external funding to an umbrella organization of NGOs operating in the education sector in a given country. This is complicated by rivalry within the NGO community and their possible links with party politics.
- 3) Channeling of external funding to selected NGOs as an earmarked component of sector program support, subject to negotiation between donor agencies, Government and the community of potential beneficiary NGOs. This option raises question of the criteria to be used in deciding on the beneficiary NGOs and the internal allocations within such a fund.<sup>5</sup>
- 4) Selection of NGOs as sub-contractors, dependent on the allocation of funds within the sector program and decided by Government.

Beyond the question of how external funding to NGOs can be justified and managed, a different kind of option that should be remembered is that NGOs become responsible for raising their own funds through membership fees and non-profit entrepreneurship or/and rely more on unpaid voluntary work. Though difficult to achieve in the context of low-income countries, progress in the direction of this alternative would significantly increase the autonomy of Southern NGOs vis-à-vis both their governments and donor agencies.

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<sup>5</sup> A simplified proposal is offered by Tomlinson (2007): "A mechanism could also be established that whenever donors coordinate funding to support a government education sector plan, an additional three per cent would be triggered to support civil society advocacy and monitoring work".



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## ANNEX 1

### Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BPEP	Basic and Primary Education Program
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CCM	Chama Cha Mapinduzi
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DEO	District Education Office
DOE	Department of Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EFA	Education for All
ESDP	Education Sector Development Program
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GoT	Government of Tanzania
HE	HakiElimu
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MOES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MOEVT	Ministry of Education and Vocational Training
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
PEDP	Primary Education Development Plan
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper
RED	Regional Education Directorate
SWAp	Sector-Wide Approach
TEN/MET	Tanzania Education Network/Mtandao wa Elimu Tanzania
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPE	Universal Primary Education
VDC	Village Development Committee

## ANNEX 2

### List of persons interviewed

#### Nepal

##### *Government of Nepal officials*

Dr. Lava Deo Awasthi, Under Secretary, Foreign Aid Coordination Section, Ministry of Education and Sports  
Mr. Ram Balak Singh, Deputy Director, Department of Education, Ministry of Education and Sports  
Mr. Kedar Chandra Khanal, Deputy Director, Non-Formal Education Center, Ministry of Education and Sports  
Mr. Harish Chand Jadav, District Education Officer (DEO), Lalitpur  
Ms. Rita Tisdall, Inclusive Education Advisor, Ministry of Education and Sports

##### *Representatives of Nepalese NGOs*

Mr. Kumar Bhattarai, Program Coordinator, Child Workers in Nepal (CWIN) Concerned Center  
Mr. Bijaya Sainju, President, Concern Nepal  
Mr. Prakash Singh Adhikari, President, Innovative Forum for Community Development (IFCD)  
Mr. Hira P. Nepal, President, Nepal National Teachers' Association Central Committee

##### *Representatives of International NGOs*

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Mr. Amos G. Mwakalinga, Ex-Director of Policy and Planning, MOEVT  
Mr. Martin S. Mwanukuzi, Head, Physical Planning and Maintenance Section, Directorate of Policy and Planning, MOEVT

Ms. Hadija Maggid, External Aid Coordination Sub-Section, Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP)

Mr. Danstan Mallya, External Aid Coordination Sub-Section, PEDP

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### *Representatives of Tanzanian NGOs*

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### *Representatives of International NGOs*

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Hanna Alasuutari & Rauni Räsänen

## PARTNERSHIP AND OWNERSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION SECTOR PROGRAMS IN ZAMBIA

### Introduction

The aim of this article is to analyse the changing nature of partnership and ownership in the area of development cooperation. It discusses how development cooperation workers in the Zambian education sector view these changes in general and specifically from the perspective of intercultural encounters. The data for this article are part of a wider doctoral study. It consists of field notes and other material gathered during a two year stay in Zambia and of intensive interviews of nineteen development cooperation professionals who have worked in the education sector of Zambia during 2000–2007.

The article first describes the education sector and the sector programs in Zambia. This is followed by a discussion of development cooperation from the point of view of ethics, related to how partnership and ownership are in the common development discourse presented as efforts to overcome inequality and the “mutuality gap”. Furthermore, the article discusses some of the changing features of partnership and ownership in the sector-wide approach, and the challenges of intercultural sensitivity and learning in multicultural working contexts as one of the central conditions for more authentic partnerships and ownership.

The sixth section of the article briefly describes the data and methodological approach of this study. The following chapter presents the interpretations of the data and discusses the changing and permanent challenges for partnership and ownership in the sector program context. It then discusses the decisive role of multi-leveled cultural sensitivity as one condition for closing the mutuality gap in the professional and individual working relations in the area

of development cooperation. The closing section presents some conclusions on the changes observed and on how development cooperation workers could be supported to meet intercultural and professional challenges in their work.

## The education sector in Zambia

According to Volan (2003, 110), the history of education in Zambia can be divided into five distinct phases. The first phase can be called the pre-colonial era (*ibid*); it is the time when indigenous, traditional education was adopted and tailored for local needs (see Snelson 1974, 1–17; Kelly 1999, 12–21). As Snelson (1974, 238) states, traditional education had a powerful and stabilizing influence on the society in spite of its drawbacks. Even if the traditional education is often considered as something that belongs to the past, it still influences parallel with the formal education system particularly in rural villages. As the role of traditional leaders is very powerful in Zambian society, education officials at different levels must take, for example, the schedules of traditional ceremonies into account in the school year in one way or another. This is sometimes challenging but the children have the responsibility to take part in traditional ceremonies, especially in the rural areas, although this might mean days' or even weeks' absence from school. Children living in towns and in the capital city Lusaka might also have some traces of traditional education in their childhood environment, but of course the role of traditional education is different in their lives compared to village life.

The second phase in the history of Zambian education is the colonial era that is dominated by missionaries and a two-pronged education system: one for African and the other for children of European descent (Volan 2003, 110). As Snelson (1974, 1) states, it is often narrated that early missionaries who came to Zambia in 1883 met people who were completely uneducated. However, this was a wrong interpretation as traditional education has taken place in Zambia for as long as human societies have existed there. The basic motive for mission work was evangelization of the indigenous people (*op.*

cit., 94). However, mission schools were considered as the foundation for the education system by the colonizers, the British authorities, who were given the responsibility to administer the Protectorate in Northern Rhodesia in 1924. “Native Education” was meant for African children and “European Education” for European children. The previous alternative received much larger financial support from the colonial power (Mwanakatwe 1974 in Volan 2003, 95).

The third phase consists of the early independence years, 1964–75, during which the Zambian education system was established and the central aim was nation-building. President Kenneth Kaunda came to power in 1964 and promised to develop Zambian education system and to abandon racial segregation. He was planning to do this with the help of his political philosophy called “Zambian Humanism”, which was rooted in Kaunda’s own beliefs and the ideals of mutual respect and cooperation and which he regarded as characteristic of pre-industrial African society (Volan op.cit., 1, 95). At the time, Zambia had an enormous shortage of educated people as there were only 107 Zambian university graduates, 4 420 people who had two years of secondary schooling and only 110 000 persons who had completed six years of primary school. As a means to overcome this challenge, the new government adopted an “Emergency Development Plan” (op.cit, 95; see also Kelly 1991). This was the beginning of a succession of many national plans and programs in the education sector of Zambia.

The fourth phase was influenced by the economic recession that started around 1975. The decline in copper prices in the world market led to serious damage which included the education sector in Zambia, causing erosion of the quality of education and decline in enrolment. It was also realized that education in Zambia was too academic to meet the challenges of the country. Based on a curriculum review and national debate, the first National Education Reform was introduced in 1977. However, there were not sufficient financial resources to implement the reform and it had been criticized for having been too ambitious and abstract. These difficulties led gradually to a stronger donor influence in the education sector in the form of loans, grants, technical assistance and commodity support (Volan op.cit., 96, 110). In addition, global

educational agendas (see the article of Packalen in this book, pp. 26–28) began to have a growing influence on the development of education in Zambia. As a result of the National Conference on Education for All, which was organised as the follow-up to the 1990 World Conference on Education for All (EFA), the second reform document “Focus on Learning” (1992) was prepared. This time the Ministry of Education in Zambia was advised to concentrate on the provision of compulsory and good quality seven-year education before embarking on secondary and tertiary education (op.cit., 96; Takala 1998).

The fifth phase in the development of the education sector in Zambia is considered to have started in 1996 when the policy document “Educating Our Future” was approved, which is still the official national policy document that guides the actions of the Ministry of Education. The fifth phase formed the basis for the planning of the Basic Education Sub-sector Program (BESSIP) that was implemented from 1999 to 2003 (Musonda 2004). BESSIP began as a World Bank initiative, although “Educating Our Future” was the policy framework of the program (Volan op.cit., 126). A strategic plan was drafted in order to agree on the principles guiding the application of the sector-wide approach (SWAp) in the education sector (Ministry of Education 2002). While BESSIP had eight different program components, the overall aim was to view the different components against the background of a holistic framework, encompassing the main goals of increased access to basic education, increased quality of basic education and increased equity (Ministry of Education 1998).

In order to set BESSIP in motion, ad hoc administrative solutions were established, and the creation of various BESSIP component committees contributed to the fact that BESSIP was not integrated into the normal structure of the Ministry of Education. For example, the different reporting formats of the different donors created a lot of extra work for the people working in the Ministry and among the donors. Additionally, in the beginning of BESSIP, only a handful of Ministry’s staff were engaged in the planning and administrating BESSIP activities, which created doubts concerning the local ownership of the program (Volan op.cit., 124). Experiences gained from BESSIP subsequently led the donors and Ministry of Education, with the

support and pressure of global agendas of harmonisation, to consider what further steps should be made in order to harmonise the activities of different donors in the Zambian education sector. Another issue raised for discussion was the lack of attention given to post-basic levels of education.

The Education Sector Plan of the Government of Zambia (Ministry of Education 2003) has been implemented during the period 2003–2007, which has been the context of the data collection for this article. This period is considered in this article as the sixth phase in the development of education sector in Zambia. In the beginning of the sixth period another big change process took place in the Ministry of Education as the restructuring of the Ministry was gradually undertaken in 2003. Inevitably, it took some time for the Ministry of Education to settle down after such a big change.

The aim of the Education Sector Plan is to follow the sector-wide approach more comprehensively and successfully than was the case during BESSIP. Most of the so-called co-operating partners, or donors, including Finland, have moved towards replacing their bilateral projects with budget support. Concerning harmonisation of procedures, much improvement has taken place during the Education Sector Plan. However, new challenges are emerging in parallel with some of the old challenges experienced also during BESSIP. For the period 2007–2010, continued progress towards further harmonisation is to be achieved within the framework of a Joint Assistance Strategy for Zambia, which is the donors' response to the Fifth National Development Plan. The plan is that the majority of the funding for the education sector in Zambia will be donated in the form of general budget support through the Ministry of Finance in Zambia.

**Different phases in the transitions of the education sector in Zambia**

1 <sup>st</sup> phase	Pre-colonial era
2 <sup>nd</sup> phase	Colonial era
3 <sup>rd</sup> phase	Early independence
4 <sup>th</sup> phase	Influences of the economic recession
5 <sup>th</sup> phase	Planning and implementation of BESSIP
6 <sup>th</sup> phase	Education Sector Plan

## Development cooperation, ethics and the mutuality gap

Development cooperation is a special form of international cooperation which has its own history with many ethical challenges. The need for international cooperation seems obvious when looking at the world situation and our everyday activities. Countries are dependent on each other's products such as food, drink, clothes, vehicles, fuel, and machines at home and at work. However, we are not dependent on each other only through material products and trade, other sectors of human life are equally influenced. Artists and researchers, for example, have always been inspired by their overseas colleagues; and great movements like humanism, civil rights, and the ideas of democracy have traveled from one country to another. The mass media and advances in electronic communication have made the flow of information more efficient and accessible. Furthermore, many global problems and challenges bind us together. Environmental threats and pollution do not recognise state borders, and the control of international crime is a joint task. We are linked to each other with so many ties that international cooperation is not merely unavoidable, but rather, a necessity. The links however, are not necessarily based on mutual or even peaceful cooperation that benefits and enriches both partners.

When we talk about development cooperation, we usually mean cooperation between the North and South, sometimes between East and West. Traditionally, the underlying assumption has been that the North is the



more developed partner which the South tries or should somehow follow or catch up with. These modernisation and catch up models have created the idea of receivers and aid providers, which has not been a healthy starting point for developing equal relationships. The visions and conceptions about the nature of cooperation and the vast differences in economic resources have caused a phenomenon called a “mutuality gap”, a situation where the statuses and realities of the two parties seem so different that equal mutual relations seem impossible.

## Barriers and possibilities in international cooperation

International relations are not only a necessity but can, at their best, be a very fruitful reality and relationship as well. This is acknowledged in economy and trade connections. In addition, national cultures have been enriched by intercultural influences, and, as discussed above, societal movements have spread from one country to another. There is plenty of research that proves that differences and new situations have inspired learning and been the source of societal innovations. At its best, international cooperation provides possibilities for new perspectives, and, through the tension created by difference and alternative views, forces participants to engage in processes of many-sided reflections (Mezirow 1991, Taylor 1994.) Dialogue with representatives of other cultures can lead to new, creative solutions. Contacts and peaceful encounters may also add to mutual understanding, and can consequently decrease prejudices and tensions between groups and cultures. (Räsänen 2005, 20–21.)

Some international relations can be particularly challenging. Azel Johnson and Gordon Wilson (2006) deliberate in their article, on the above mentioned “mutuality gap” and point out that inequality is a special issue in South-North cooperation, and it is based on a range of dimensions such as access to resources, power relations, knowledge, and capacities. They further argue that partners may also have different assumptions, perspectives/worldviews, agendas and expectations. Their ways of working may be different, as well as their ideas

of what is essential in the tasks they are working with. Johnson and Wilson analyse development cooperation from the perspective of two counter-posing types of partnership: an ideal view of partnership that is based on mutuality, and a sceptical view that assumes that mutuality is not possible because of inequality, especially unequal power relations. The corollary of the argument is that people working in development cooperation should be aware of the gap, and work for creating conditions for more equal and just partnerships.

When discussing the obstacles and conditions for intercultural cooperation, one has to consider them from an individual, institutional, and structural point of view. Very often the obstacles and conditions are considered as individual features and phenomena, and structural aspects are neglected. Instead, it must be recognised that the political and cultural climate can either favour or hinder, for example, the increased cooperation between North and South. Intercultural cooperation, immigration and development cooperation can be seen either as a burden or as a partnership and positive resource. It is again a question of values; of whether intercultural cooperation is seen as a valuable and enriching experience, and whether people living far away are considered important and of equal value with those nearby. In addition, one has to remember that there have existed (and still exist) forms of cultural exchange which are, or have been, far from the ideals of equal partnerships and have been characterised by egoism, ethnocentrism, a sense of superiority, and cultural hegemony. (Räsänen 2005, 19–20.) In the discussion below we will try to analyse the value-basis from the equity point of view, which would make fruitful learning and cooperation possible even in situations where the starting point is unequal.

### Ethical guidelines as a means to close the mutuality gap

The report of the World Commission, *Our Creative Diversity* (1995, 36–38), discusses global ethics as one of its main themes when considering conditions for intercultural cooperation. It emphasises the Golden Rule, human vulnerability, attending to the human impulse to alleviate suffering, and the equality of

all human beings as central sources of and inspiration for the core of global ethics. These derive from old philosophical and spiritual traditions of many cultures. At the same time, the report suggests that the gradual development of international human rights standards, which are based on these common cultural conceptions, have given rise to more concrete normative elements in the emerging global civic culture. It states that the demand for human rights and the consciousness of a shared ecosystem are constantly shaping people's moral ideas throughout the world. The report divides the core of global ethics into five main elements: human rights and responsibilities, democracy and civil society, the protection of minorities, the commitment to peaceful conflict resolution and fair negotiation, and equity within and between generations. (Räsänen 2005, 22–23.)

Researchers in the field of global ethics generally argue that human dignity is the key concept to responsible orientation in an international world (e.g. Pietilä 2003; Sihvola 2004). Referring to Immanuel Kant, Sihvola states that the basis for global ethics is the respect for humanity, which presupposes treating everyone as a subject and as an aim instead of suppressing people to the position of an object or a means for gaining something. Sihvola points out that respecting human dignity means more than guaranteeing formal democracy or the equality of clients in the business world. Genuine global citizenship requires the appreciation of the many dimensions of humanity: the perception of human beings as thinking, feeling, acting and purposeful creatures. Global citizenship means commitment to a world order in which it is possible to construct humanity in spite of state or cultural borders or ethnic, religious, social class or other background factors. (Sihvola op.cit., 12.) According to the basic moral teachings of the great traditions, the notion of the basic moral equity of all human beings, and the profoundly human urge to avoid unnecessary suffering form the essential point of reference for global ethics (Our Creative Diversity 1995, 36).

On the basis of the discussion above, we can now summarise the ethical guidelines for fruitful intercultural and international cooperation (cf. Räsänen 2005, 30). First of all, cooperation must be considered valuable and

important; people must be willing and motivated to co-operate. Secondly, the cooperation, as any cooperation or human contact, should be based on the idea of treating others as subjects and as goals instead of as a means for something. This implies such essential principles and dispositions as empathy, listening, taking seriously, respect and appreciation of others: the commitment to equity between people, groups and cultural areas. Fruitful intercultural cooperation also requires the commitment to mutual learning and dialogue. Equal intercultural dialogue challenges us to evaluate things from new perspectives and to widen our horizons and scope of caring. Commitment to mutual learning process, dialogue, pursuit for equity and continuous identity negotiation process thus seems to be the key to ethically sensitive cooperation between countries and cultures.

## Changing characteristics of partnership and ownership in the transitions of cooperation

Part of the data for this research is collected from people who have worked particularly with special and inclusive education. During the years 2000–2003, this component was a sub-component of the bi-lateral program between the governments of Finland and Zambia and was implemented as a project. Since 2004, special/inclusive education has been part of the government of Zambia education sector program, as a component which is implemented in a cross-cutting manner, together with other “special issues” (equity and gender, and HIV/AIDS). While this study considers changes in partnerships and ownership in the Zambian education sector in general, it gives particular attention to the component of special and inclusive education.

Over the years, partnership has been used as a term to describe relationships in development aid and cooperation activities. Although the term “partnership” was first clearly presented in *Partners in Development* in 1969 by the Commission on International Development (Alasuutari 2005, 38), its roots are found in the colonial times, as colonizers described even the

colonial rule as “partnership” (Kontinen 2003, 137; Alasuutari 2005, 39). This example demonstrates that the term should be defined precisely and its manifestations should be carefully analysed in order to prevent misuse of the concept and in order to have a common understanding of its meaning in the area of development cooperation

Ownership did not become a popular term until in 1990 (e.g. Vainio-Mattila 2000, 434). It is considered as problematic of a term as partnership (Moore et al. 1996) in the area of development cooperation. Whether one uses the term ‘development aid’ or ‘development cooperation’, the aid relationship is based on inequalities between donor countries and recipient countries (op. cit., 3–4). In the era of the sector-wide approach, inequalities among donor countries have also become an important issue.

Both ‘partnership’ and ‘ownership’ include an assumption of mutuality as the aim. Whether this aim has or can become a reality is a different question. The terms are part of development cooperation jargon and are seldom questioned. As Moore et al. (op.cit., 72) point out, such terms can play a useful role in drawing attention to neglected problems and in mobilizing resources to do something about them. That is what this article aims at doing through analyzing the complexity of the terms and deliberating on the conditions for realizing the ideals. It further discusses the role of individuals in interpreting and implementing the ideals of mutual and equal cooperation. As Edwards (1999, 205) claims, development work needs people and institutions that listen, learn, innovate, and make connections (see also Alasuutari 2005b). If partnership and ownership are the goals in development cooperation, one has to analyse what the conditions, means and ways of working are both on institutional and personal levels of development cooperation. Edwards (1999, 205) points out the intertwined relationship of institutions and individuals as follows: “Effective institutions grow from developed individuals, just as institutional cultures and incentives shape the skills of their staff.”

As stated above, this article discusses the terms ‘partnership’ and ‘ownership’ in development cooperation particularly from the perspective of intercultural encounters and considers the changes in these conceptions and practices in the

transition from the project approach towards sector program support in the education sector in Zambia. It discusses some of the structural and institutional problem areas but particularly focuses on the challenges these changes pose to the grass-root level actors in the field. The sources of information are the professionals who have been working in the field in different positions.

## Development cooperation from the perspective of intercultural encounters

Zambian and European development cooperation workers interviewed in this study all work in a multicultural working environment. However, there is a difference in the living contexts of the two groups, as Zambians work in their home country. However, Zambian society is very multicultural with a variety of ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Even if the Zambians are not living in “another culture” as such, they too experience situations in which they have to look at their world from a different perspective when co-operating with the expatriate professionals. For the latter, the multicultural environment and intercultural encounters are more obvious.

The challenges of development cooperation and partnership have been studied a lot from the perspective of the North (e.g. Kealey 1990; Kealey & Protheroe 1995; Eriksson Baaz 2002) and research has pointed out a lot of problematic questions and critical reflections. However, the perspective, alone, of the North is insufficient, as the cooperation takes place between the North and the South and the activities are located in the South. Especially when looking at the challenges of cultural encounters in development cooperation, a specific effort must be made to look at the relations from the Southern perspectives as well. Of course, neither the Northern or Southern perspectives are monolithic, but views expressed by individuals vary and may conflict with each other. As this article is written by two researchers from the North, it brings a Northern perspective into the discussions; however, the development

cooperation workers interviewed for this article are both from the North and South.

There is a lot of research in the area of development aid and cooperation activities that are carried out at the macro level and discuss the policy, structural and institutional issues (see also Takala & Doftori and Packalen in this publication). There is less research analysing the micro level challenges from the perspective of cultural sensitivity (Eriksson Baaz 2002), and this kind of research is often carried out in the area of NGO cooperation. Cultural issues are also considered a complex and difficult topic in the multicultural and asymmetric field of development cooperation as it is not easy to define the cultures that would be at stake (Kontinen 2007, 45). As Seppälä (2000, 23–32) discusses, one should not look at the issue of different cultures as static or simplistic phenomena and consider that there are, for example, some who represent the “local culture” and others that represent the “western culture”. The problem cannot be solved by referring only to “aid culture” either. This article suggests that people working in the multicultural environment should be encouraged to analyse cultures as multi-leveled and dynamic phenomena, and they should be supported to enter into identity negotiations in order to make the dynamic process of “one’s culture” visible and more understandable. In these encounters the dualistic view of “local culture” and “western culture” is simply not enough.

All in all, one can argue that intercultural sensitivity and learning provide tools to operate better in intercultural cooperation even in the “aid culture”. In her earlier articles Alasuutari (2005a; 2005b) has analysed partnership in development cooperation both theoretically and through empirical data. The empirical results presented in the earlier article that discusses experiences of development cooperation from the perspective of partnership (Alasuutari 2005b, 178–180) show that although partnership is a very ambiguous term and stakeholders have many reservations about it, they still express hopes about equal relations and authentic partnerships and views concerning preconditions for the process towards this ideal. The conditions presented by stakeholders were combined into three categories: 1) critical awareness and

action, 2) intercultural sensitivity and competences and 3) professional training and orientation (op.cit., 180). These categories can be studied separately but they are also interrelated and are all required in partnerships (see figure in this article). The combination of these conditions has been given the name, “critical and professional intercultural orientation” in the article. The three components of this orientation are shortly discussed below.

Critical awareness and action consist of consciousness of historical legacies and power structures, as well as willingness and skills for reducing asymmetry and preventing inequity in partnership. Many authors claim that one of the most important challenges in development cooperation is to realize, reflect and deal with the systemic power relations in cooperation (Biggs & Smith 2000, 1754; Johnson & Wilson 2000, 1894; Kontinen 2007, 44). The historical as well as current power structures affect relationships, and can thus become barriers for partnership. One cannot ignore these but should be conscious of and act against them if one is to strive towards more authentic partnerships. According to the results of the earlier article (Alasuutari 2005b), it is possible to reduce asymmetry in everyday working situations where equity between individuals exists. This was possible in situations where a safe and confidential working environment was combined with a sense of humour and open atmosphere where sincere discussions and listening to each other were possible. Genuine ownership and empowerment were also considered essential if the purpose was to decrease asymmetry permanently.

Intercultural sensitivity and competences played an important role among the conditions mentioned by development cooperation workers (op.cit.). Authentic partnership was considered more reachable if cultural awareness, understanding and knowledge were combined with certain skills and culturally sensitive action. The importance of reflecting the experiences in the learning process was emphasised. Mutual respect and trust as well as genuineness were described as corner stones in building partnerships. These attitudes could open up a path towards dialogue and cultural understanding in working relations. However, dialogue does not become genuine without the ability to listen to others. That is why the informants also pointed out listening as being



an important competence in the process towards partnership and cultural learning.

Professional training and orientation are essential in order to become professionally competent and to be able to apply one's know-how to the local conditions together with the Southern partners. In addition to knowledge of the local cultures, professionalism is considered to include good co-ordination and leadership skills as well (Alasuutari op.cit.).



#### **Conditions of partnership** (Alasuutari 2005b, 180)

Alasuutari (op.cit.) argues in her article that development cooperation workers should be listened to and their everyday practices and situations should be studied more, particularly when decisions are made about their orientation training. On the basis of their experiences, they are also essential informants when the conditions for ethically sustainable, equal cooperation are studied. The quality of individual relations matters even if the structures are not favourable. The structures and institutions of both the wider and immediate partnership environment inevitably affect development cooperation workers,

but they themselves can also influence the structures of the environments, at least in the long run (Alasuutari, 2005b).

In order to be able to understand the “other” properly, one has to encounter oneself. If one aims at looking at the world from a different perspective one should be aware of issues that are affecting one’s own worldview as well. Many authors (see e.g. Taylor 1994, 389–392; Mezirow; Jokikokko & Lamminmäki-Kärkkäinen & Räsänen 2004, 338; Jokikokko 2005; Salakka 2006) have argued that becoming interculturally competent requires transformation of perspectives, which usually occurs either through a series of experiences that cause changes in meaning schemes or as a result of an acute personal crisis or shock. These meaning schemes are like a “double-edged sword”, and they give meaning to our own experiences. At the same time, they limit our perception of reality. The meaning schemes are often acquired through primary socialisation and other socialisation processes in the course of the childhood, mostly through significant experiences at home, at school, or in the society and environment, including the effects of media for example (see Jokikokko & Lamminmäki-Kärkkäinen & Räsänen 2004, 338; Andersson 1994, 320–322). Many development cooperation workers might encounter “the other” perspective for the first time during their first assignment abroad. This experience often initiates a process of analysing oneself and negotiating one’s identity again. Through other perspectives, they have to look at their views and beliefs “from the outside”, which might begin a process of transformation – a journey from where one cannot return.

## Empirical research tasks and methodological approach

The empirical research task of this article is to find out the views of the professionals who work *in* or *with* the education sector in Zambia<sup>1</sup> at the

<sup>1</sup> Some of the informants work only *in* the education sector e.g. in the Ministry of Education in Zambia. Others might have additional tasks if they work for example with the Embassy. That is why they would belong to the category of people who work *with* the education

national level, and who are of Zambian or European origin, concerning the forms of partnership and ownership in the sector program context. It takes into account both the changing and permanent challenges of partnership and ownership.

The research questions are:

1. How do development cooperation workers view the changes of partnership and ownership in the Zambian Education sector?
2. What kind of barriers and possibilities exist in the process towards partnership and ownership, and how has adoption of the sector-wide approach affected these?
3. What is the role of intercultural encounters and sensitivity in partnership and ownership?

Methodologically, the research is a qualitative study with ethnographical features. In ethnographical research, the researcher spends long periods of time in the field collecting data mainly through interviews but also through observation and analysing documents. The data for this research consists of field notes about the context and the phenomena under investigation and more detailed information including documents and interview material. The data analysis for this article has been carried out by using qualitative content analysis (Miles & Huberman 1994; Kyngäs & Vanhanen 1999 in Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002), where the themes were categorised according to the three research questions.

The data collection for this article was accomplished in different stages. It consists of interview material collected by the first author of the article, Hanna Alasuutari, during her two, one month visits to Zambia in 2004 and 2007. Prior to this, she had already worked in Zambia for two years, 2002–2003, as an associate adviser in a provincial office of education. As van Velsen (1967, 145) argues, the ethnographic method requires close acquaintance with individuals and the context over a lengthy period of time and knowledge of

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sector in this article. The term used in this article to characterise all the people interviewed is “development cooperation workers”.

their personal histories and network relationships. As a researcher, Alasuutari has been able to get acquainted with some informants better than with the others. Her personal history in Zambia helped in collecting the data and made possible to use the networks of friends and official bodies when identifying informants during the second and third visit to Zambia in 2004 and in 2007. During the data collection trip to Zambia in 2004, a total of 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted, out of which 10 interviews, that were more informative related to the research questions of this article, were chosen to be used for this article. The data from the visit in 2007 utilized for this article consists of 9 semi-structured interviews, thus totaling 19 interviews. The interviewees are Zambian and European informants, who worked in different positions dealing with the education sector, either in the Ministry of Education as civil servants or as technical advisors (TA) or in embassies. The 19 interviews specifically dealt with the conditions and changes in partnerships and ownership.

17 of the interviews were carried out in English and 2 in Finnish. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The interviews lasted 1–1.5 hours each. The extracts from the Finnish interviews used for this article were translated into English. The language in the extracts presented in this article has sometimes been slightly corrected to make it more understandable. The key sentences or words in quotations are bolded, in order to point out the basis for the conclusions. The nationalities or the gender of the informants have not been mentioned in order to secure their anonymity.

## Views of professionals on partnership and ownership

There were three different aspects that were studied in the data analysis of this research. They were structured into the following categories on the basis of the research questions:

1) Old and new challenges of partnership, 2) conditions for a new type of ownership, and 3) the role of intercultural encounters and sensitivity in

partnership and ownership. As a whole, informants seem to hold the view that the sector-wide approach has caused changes in partnership relations and increased Zambian ownership. It was easier than before for the host country's ministry to decide what to do with the available resources. Partnership had on the one hand become easier, but at the same time new challenges and obstacles had emerged. The informants considered ownership of the host country as a more realistic aim in development cooperation than authentic or equal partnership. The role of culture and cultural sensitivity was emphasised in many interviews, but not all. Other factors like personality and attitudes were considered important for successful working relations as well.

## New and old challenges of partnership

The possibility of “authentic partnership” in the context of the asymmetric relationships of development cooperation is considered very unrealistic and controversial (see Alasuutari 2005b). When development cooperation workers talk about partnership that might be possible, they often refer to the micro level relations – encounters between individuals, who seem to be able to work in partnerships that are to some extent authentic. Partnership is then regarded as a dynamic process between people where they might change if they are sensitive and able to learn. Partnership is thus an equal relationship characterized by negotiation, dialogue and dynamic change.

Well, well. Just to give you a layman's definition, a partnership... ..it's a *being on equal terms*, and each having their own obligations, I mean, *each party should be able to meet their part of the deal*. There has to be... ..*conducive relationship or communication environment* that would be able to facilitate that... Because when we're talking about partnership, we must be talking about *understanding the other person*, and we must also be talking about you being able to *communicate your position, and negotiations, being able to find the middle way*. ...So I think it [partnership] is not something that is static. I think it's a process; it's a dynamic thing, something that really lives its own life. I think you have to *constantly work at it basically*. You can't say now we've reached this level. Because I've seen it change depending on who's there then, that particular point in time (A 2004)

It was also stated that Zambia has gone through many different phases in educational development as well as in the forms of cooperation with the donors.

...It [Zambia] is an interesting country to be in... I think *Zambia has gone through all the phases [of development cooperation approaches]*... the way partners deal with, from the individual projects to the start of sector wide approaches to pooling to joint assistant strategy...and now perhaps to general budget support ... (A 2007, 1)

It seems that there are features in partnership that have changed in the transition towards SWAp. The dynamism in the change processes during the first year of SWAp in the education sector of Zambia is described in the following:

I think the partnership has been more successful... ..When we started, when I joined [refers to the current employer], it... ..was still very much in a project mode. ... .. the project had a label, it was the thing of [the name of the donor country], and *so it wasn't an equal thing... So, I mean basically it was a project and the donor was responsible... ..it was implemented by the ministry, but the donor was calling the shots...*... ..So then I think the process moved to the current setup, to what we have now. And I think yes, we have made tremendous process towards partnership. Because I wondered in the beginning, in those meetings, you could see a really unbalanced kind of relationship, within the donors as well as between the donors and the Ministry of Education. And at that stage I remember there were some donors that more or less seemed to be in the lead. And sitting there in their position and bulldozing everyone, and that kind of thing. At the same time we find that there was very unequal partnership with the Ministry of Education. Actually, it was more like a yes-yes kind of partnership on the part of the ministry.... *And what we have now may not be very good, it may not be the ultimate, but I think there definitely has been great progress...* (A 2004)

The informants mostly stated that there has been positive change towards more equal partnerships as a whole, although this has been difficult particularly in the beginning. Previous analyses of the sector-wide approach have pointed out that in SWAp, a distinction can be made between two levels of partnership: 1)

partnership among different donors and 2) partnership between the agencies and the Ministry of Education (e.g. Takala & Marope 2003, 27–28; Saasa, Gurdian, Taddesse & Chintan 2003, 119–122; Alasuutari 2005a; 2005b). However, in the education sector of Zambia, the individual relationships between the Ministry of Education and each donor constitute a third level of partnership that still existed in one way or another during the time of our data collection. This is a legacy from the era of projects in the education sector, which may gradually become less prevalent.

One thing the *ministry is also fully aware is that the cooperating partners would still like their independent voices to be heard*. This is evident in all the meetings which we attend; we try to hear whatever they want independently. And one way is to allow in such meetings for them to present a consolidated request, if they have any, for the ministry to consider. Rather than to allow single individuals... (C 2004)

The aim in the education sector of Zambia has been to try to find the means for the Ministry not to operate individually with all the different donors. The process was described in 2004 in the following way.

We started from a long way back, where even the cooperating partners and the ministry could not sit at one table, with mixed donors, the ministry was dealing with separate donors and the transaction cost related to that was quite enormous. *But when we agreed to setting up a joint management structure, we started seeing things being easy*, both for the Ministry in terms of transaction costs, and we also avoided repetitiveness of talking to the various donors independently. (C 2004)

It seems that many procedures and practices have been harmonized, which has made things easier, more cost- and time-effective and has saved unnecessary repetition of negotiations and meetings. The development was considered positive by many of the interviewees also in 2007. In addition to earlier positive effects the respondents mentioned the fact that they were better prepared for the joint meeting with the many donors:

...people in the Ministry say that it has changed the way the Ministry of Education works with the donors... *...there is not only less donors*

*to deal with but the Ministry feels they are better prepared for the meetings with the donors...* (A 2007)

However, it was mentioned in the 2004 data that processes of harmonisation were carried out too much from the perspective of the donors. The large number of donors at the meetings and their strong cooperation might also make the voice of the host country weaker.

Harmonisation seems to be a popular term at the moment... *but one should carry out harmonisation also depending on the organisation, culture and way of working in the local country.* Sometimes it seems that when you talk about *harmonisation*, it *means that the donors harmonize among each other... so that they have the same reporting format.* But I would like to ask if the harmonisation *should also take place in the Ministry of Education or inside Zambia among different Ministries.* ... What does the Ministry of Finance want etc... *it seems that the current practices towards harmonisation are an obstacle towards this.* ...I was training in one workshop – which was an expensive workshop – about the harmonisation but it was organized only for the donors. I criticised that. ...This harmonisation takes place with the rules of the donors... the donors consider that the process is good in the long-term but do not consider other aspects of reality as the Ministry is not a participant in the harmonisation process. (B 2004)

A kind of “informal donor’s group” started functioning in 2000 in order to respond to the challenges of the many donors involved in the work with the Ministry of Education. However, the cooperation of donors was not always efficient, and the meetings were not coordinated or the cooperation was not coherent.

In 2000, there was already established an informal donors’ group of sorts. But I think it was more like information sharing talk shop really. *People [donors] often had done things without discussing beforehand. There was also no coherence;* it wasn’t strategically looking at issues, key issues. And it didn’t have an idea that was linked to the other consultative groups. (D 2004)



Some of the Ministry of Education officials also considered that it was not fair that the donors had discussed issues beforehand and the Ministry was not able to do that with them.

The practices in the cooperation between the donors and the Ministry of Education had changed in 2007, and there were two lead donors who were in closer cooperation with the Ministry of Education and represented the donor group. These two seemed to coordinate partnership also among the donors. So at the time, the Ministry of Education was rather happy that the donors had their meetings where they discussed issues among themselves and the lead donors represented the collective positions to the Ministry of Education. However, the changes in the procedures and partnerships brought also a new challenge for the Ministry of Education of not knowing which donor actually said what. It was stated that sometimes it was not clear whose views the lead donors presented to the Ministry of Education. The position of the small donors might also have become much weaker than before in the negotiations.

I recall one person from the Ministry of Education telling me that s/he is annoyed with the donors... when we have the meeting and someone wants to take the floor, *s/he never knows whether it is myself who wants to say something smart or whether it is the country or Embassy I work for or whether I talk behalf of [all] the donors...* it is quite annoying because you sometimes have to judge the way people report or make a remark or not...that is difficult when this is not clear... now I think it is more clear...we have gone to the level... ..we have own opinions, we consult each other[with the donors]... then we write consolidated comments... which gives perhaps the idea of “teaming up”. (A 2007)

Various means can be developed for a more equally formed voice of the donors. One method is to prepare written joint documents or comments before the meetings. This was stated as one method of working among the donors in the Zambian education sector. The development on the harmonisation and donors becoming rather one team than individual actors has also been seen as a negative issue by some officials in the Ministry of Education. Harmonisation has caused some issues to be dropped off the agenda, as the list of priorities in the education sector is considered too abundant. At the same time, the legacy

of projects is still manifested, in that more strategic long-term planning is considered difficult. One problem is also the fact that sometimes important decisions at the high levels of the Ministry are made without sufficient knowledge or interest of some specific issues, e.g. special and inclusive education.

... I think... many people in the Ministry see the advantage of the donors working closely with them... I think sometimes the other directorates, not in planning [Directorate of Planning], the other directorates sometimes feel they are losing a bit of the cloud... *in the past they would have "their donor" with whom they could talk about this specific issue... this is all part of this strategic plan... if your directorate is not including specific issues into the strategic plan, you lose out...* the issue of special and inclusive education and also literacy [could be examples] ... *I don't think they have a very strong defenders at the Ministry of Education...* so you see that there is not really a lobby for them... They are important [issues] but you see that in the Ministry of Education they have a very low priority... and perhaps the donors in that sense are also a bit responsible as we focus on the sector as such...those issues that are much more specialized and require specific attention...they tend a little bit to drop out...I also don't know how would we be able to improve it... I think we have improved on focus... (A 2007)

One fear in the change of mode of cooperation is that when making important decisions between the Ministry and the donors, the substance of education is not discussed sufficiently and with relevant professional expertise.

*...in the dialogue with the Ministry...* we talk a lot more about what I would like to call process... *we talk about the way we do business much more than we talk about education...* (A 2007)

A contrasting development with the above is that the role of the technical advisors is different in the sector program context and they are apparently able to concentrate more on working together with the different stakeholders than during the project approach. Especially the senior technical advisors working in projects often had management tasks as a major part of their responsibilities.

*I am not tight with the money of the donor... or the donor...* Many people do not understand that I am not representing a donor but that I

am TA in the Ministry and for the Ministry... the closest colleagues do, but many others don't... .. people ask that what is your project and what money are you responsible for... (B 2004)

In SWAp, technical advisors work either in the structures of the Ministry or are part of the staff of the different embassies. The role of an advisor is likely to be affected by whether s/he is considered as a person working in the structures of the Ministry or in the Embassy. One will be regarded as a person working for the donor if one is positioned in the Embassy. If one works in the Ministry, it might be possible to represent the Ministry and not the donor. However, getting to know the people and ways of working in Zambia is considered very important in all the modes of work.

When I first came to Zambia, I know I've been working in many African countries, in ministries, I could've said I know it all already... ..What I did, I found useful as I said to who was then the deputy PS, I said, would you mind very much if I could have a corner of a room in the building [of Ministry of Education] and do some work, maybe three times a week, and get to know a bit more about how BESSIP is working... ..talk to people. I did that for about three months, and it really was a very useful insight. *I didn't do too much talking, I did more listening... ..I talked to the deputy PS every week, I had half an hour with her... ..and that also builds up the relationship.* (D 2004)

The development cooperation workers describe that there are issues that have not changed even if the mode of cooperation has moved from projects towards SWAp. People have continued to work with each other in a multicultural working environment and the challenges of intercultural cooperation are present. One of the challenges in cooperation in the education sector of Zambia that the development cooperation workers complained about was that people work often for a short time in a given position. There are changes in the Ministry of Education and also short term contracts among donor employees. Assignments from two to a maximum of four years are usual in the donor community, with the exception of local personnel in the different embassies. One interviewee describes how, as people change, the dynamics change:

...what I've seen actually, based on my perception, *it [partnership] is also depending very much on personalities*, who are there at that particular point in time. Even in the *ministry, because sometimes yes, you have people there who are strong*, who are able to provide some good level of basis upon, which this partnership can be strengthened, but at times you find that then there really is no basis, because certain people have moved, and you have a problem. *Then within the donors as well, you have different dynamics. Each time you have a change of people, the dynamics change.* (A 2004)

## Conditions for a new type of ownership

Ownership should not be just a term but a concept that is reflected and also acted upon. One interviewee pondered that the starting point here is a genuine feeling of identification:

The way I understand ownership is somebody being able to, first of all, feel genuinely that *they are part of, or are committed to that cause, whatever is taking place*. I think I'd use the word identify... *... are able to identify with it*, and are able to ensure that they feel that they need to see it happen. So they will take action, they will take, maybe even certain risks. So that this... I think ownership is somehow an inner drive I think, based on people's perception of how they relate to that particular... (A 2004)

There is a strong consensus among practitioners that SWAp strengthens local ownership. However, when asking the development cooperation workers in the education sector in Zambia who the "owner" of the activities and decisions is, the answers varied. Some answered without hesitation that Ministry of Education had the ownership. However, one informant suggested the concept of "dual ownership".

I may say that it's dual ownership. *Dual ownership in the way that during the design of the strategic plan, the seven years' strategic plan, the ministry together with its cooperating partners set out to achieve some design, what was missing, what could be done, and how it could be done*. So that, in other words, *both the ministry and the donors are owning the program from their own sense*. When it comes to financing, some people may argue to say, whoever finances

a program, owns that one. But there is again joint financing, the last figures indicate about 52 % of finances are coming from the government, that is including the personal involvements, related expenditures, and then the remaining 48 %, they are coming in sort of direct financing from the cooperating partners. So that again is a joint ownership. (C 2004)

The interviewees also outlined that there was stronger local ownership in some issues and weaker in others. The focus of the discourse varied depending on the work tasks. Some talked a lot about documents and others about actual activities. One donor representative discussed ownership in the following way:

I think the *ministry feels ownership to their strategic plan*, that document. I also think that *they feel ownership to the annual work plan* that they've produced, but sometimes... ..this is just a perception... *I don't always feel that they have the ownership to the whole monitoring process*. I don't feel that they see the need for so much reporting, be it narrative, technical or financial. That to them, they don't really own that process because I don't think they use it much as a management tool. I think it's more to just please the donors, so they don't have so much ownership there... ..But I do feel that they have ownership for ...these... overall policy and the strategic plan as such. But maybe not so much for the follow-up. (E 2004)

...Sometimes I feel also that I have more ownership to these *papers, documents, but not really seeing it in the operational form, with all their activities, and what's actually got to happen on the road*. It's very much still some nice visions and plans, and they are difficult to operationalise, it's not done just like that. (E 2004)

Many of the interviewees stated that ownership is strong at the national level in the Ministry of Education, but also ask how strong it really is at other levels? Do the provincial, district and school levels feel they are truly the owners of the different programs in the Ministry of Education in Zambia? As the system is central, the ownership might be very far from the hands of education professionals at the grass-root level.

*When you talk about ownership, really you must look at it at different levels*. Because sometimes we talk about ownership, maybe because of

some decisions or things that have happened at a headquarter level. But I find that at the lower levels people don't know, they don't identify with that process. So to what extent can we say that really that... ... there's a good level of ownership? ...I think *we should also think of it [ownership] in a much broader context, to what extent is it really entrenched in the context, in the local context*, or are we talking about *ownership just because there's a nice team at the ministry*, four or five people there. ...To what extent are we ensuring that the sense of participation in the, for example the educational sector is there? (A 2004)

### The significant role of multi-leveled cultural sensitivity in partnership and ownership

According to the data analysed for this article, cultural sensitivity is required at many levels, both among Zambians and Europeans working in education sector development cooperation in Zambia. People must be sensitive and aware of the issues at the macro- (global and international levels), meso- (national level, structures in the ministry and its organizational culture) and micro (individual level) level of the structures (see also Alasuutari 2005b, 162).

The challenges of cultural sensitivity and encounters at the micro level are discussed in this chapter because the informants mostly focused on them. The discussion begins with presenting the narratives of three informants concerning the same meeting – a meeting, which also the researcher attended as an observer during her data collection in 2004. The three individuals have all been working in the education sector of Zambia for more than two years. During the time the interview took place, one of them was working in the Ministry and two in the Embassies that are active in the education sector in Zambia. These three narratives clearly demonstrate how differently the various parties interpret some of the challenges in the intercultural cooperation among the donors and between the Ministry of Education and the donors. All the different interpretations of the situation in the Zambian education sector cannot be described in these quotations, but these examples serves to illustrate

how people view even in the same situation differently when analysing what happened, reflecting their different positions and cultural backgrounds.

One of the informants, who worked in the Ministry of Education, described the committee that held the meeting in this way.

So that committee, ...which you attended, it was first four donors and four government officials. Then later on we increased to six cooperating partners, and six government officials. It's not all representative, the donors for example would like to have a larger voice into there. From also what I understand, in certain countries, some donors have a voice through one donor, who is sort of a representative, spokesperson for the rest of the donors. ***But we have got around that by having maybe six spokesmen, representing the rest of the donors.*** One thing the Ministry is also fully aware is the cooperating partners would still like their independent voices to be heard. This is evident in all the meetings, which we attend; we try to hear whatever they want independently. And one way is to allow in such meetings for them to present a consolidated request, if they have any, for the ministry to consider, rather than to allow single individuals... (C 2004)

The atmosphere of the same meeting was considered very unpleasant by one interviewee of European origin:

The least pleasant is when you have to, as in this meeting we had today, when you still have to remind them [officials in the Ministry of Education] of everything that was underlined or emphasized in the paper that was distributed. It's all issues that were there for the annual review. They're supposed to be there addressed and the work planned. I mean, they should just be part of the activities for this year. ***It's in a way depressing to see such slow progress, and it's not really so comfortable either to have to remind them every so often.*** Be there with your finger, and come on! I'd like to think of them, I know they are, highly educated and smart people, but sometimes you wonder, what have you been doing for the last two years? When things haven't moved, emails have just been slumbering somewhere... (E 2004)

But then also, you don't want to dictate everything to the ministry. ***You'd like them to realize some of these things themselves.*** And come up with their own ideas, and then have this ownership to... Okay, we have some... (E 2004)

Because they also see that things aren't moving so slowly, not moving so fast. It's all going slowly. You'd like them to recognize it and table it,

and say, it's going like this and this. And to mitigate, we're proposing ABC. That's rarely coming. My experience so far, just over a year. *It's more like, the donors have to do as today.* Oh-oh, we're concerned, it's going very slowly. And then they sit for a week and give some sort of reply, or say just we will improve, we will improve. At least it gives some reminder that we haven't forgotten, and don't get slack. But I just... I don't know. I think it's just gonna move much slower than we thought, and maybe in two or three years there'll be a more efficient structure. We have to hope, otherwise there's no point. (E 2004)

Another European interviewee wondered whether such a meeting could have been interpreted as a strong interference by the donor. However, s/he also emphasized that the donor has to be active as it takes the risk in giving 100 % responsibility in financial management to the local government.

And yes, it would be ideal that we don't come in very much, and when we have that meeting, like the other day, *it could be argued that it amounts to interference.* But on the other hand, what we were presenting were issues that they are well aware of. I think people on the directors said that we know these are points we have to accept are here. We have to address them. They're not unfair criticisms. *I think we can play a role in highlighting where we feel things are not going well.* (D 2004)

...And also, *really we have to be able to make an effort to safeguard from certain...* If people say to us, you're throwing all this money away, and you don't know where it's going, we can challenge that. Say no, no, we're not as careless as that, we are trying to ensure that the money is directed to the right areas. *And yes when you put money into a budget, you take risks, which you don't do in other programs.* (D 2004)

One can see from the extracts that the Zambian official working in the Ministry of Education highlighted mainly positive points of view about the meeting from the Ministry's perspective. S/he did not feel that the donors were dominating as s/he had longer experience concerning the work with the specific donors. S/he did suggest, however, that it would have been a more transparent practice and would have shown cultural sensitivity if the Ministry had been given more time to discuss the issues before the meeting, as the donors had done among themselves:



*It might have seemed like the cooperating partners are dictating, but I don't think that is the case...* ...only fault there was the ministry was not given sufficient time. Under normal circumstances, at least the one in which they raise those issues, would have been presented to the Ministry to allow them [Ministry] to meet on their own, and critically look at the issues, so that they could present in that meeting a unified sort of voice. *The donors, they themselves have the informal donors meeting, where at least they raise the issues, and they all agree to say yes, decide to issues, but that chance for the Ministry was not accorded.* It has not always been like that, because I have been with that group for quite a long time. They usually send beforehand, maybe they might have met under some other circumstances, which would not have allowed them to send the document much earlier. But I still have all the hope that the normal patterns will still be observed. (C 2004)

And on the other hand, it could be understood from the point of view of the cooperating partners... ...I'm very sympathetic right now with what is going on inside the Ministry. The Ministry is at a weakened position in terms of management. It is not as strong as it used to be in the past. *The Ministry seems to be losing that direction to creditably say that they are owning the program.* And as a result, the cooperating partners are also getting worried also take the blame. They will not turn around and say "No no, it's the Ministry, which allowed this thing to generate". So that they [donors] *have a duty to at least be proactive and remind the Ministry:* "this, in our eyes, we don't seem to agree, what can we do?" (C 2004)

All of the informants mentioned that cultural competences are very crucial in cooperation. Some of these could be considered as challenges in the "aid culture", which is characterized by power structures and inequality by Seppälä (2000, 31). Some features mentioned in the data are very typical of the Zambian society, and some challenges can be similar in any intercultural cooperation or encounter (see e.g. Jokikokko 2005). The cultural aspects that were frequently discussed in the data of this article are presented below.

It was stated several times that overly emotional behavior in meetings is not considered appropriate in Zambia and that this might affect negotiations and the working climate. One of the European interviewees stated that respect should be shown at all times to affirm a good atmosphere for the cooperation.

If we do not respect other people in their own country, on their continent, how can we expect them to respect us? This is, in my opinion, the one of the main principles... there is no need to agree on everything and say that everything they do is wonderful... but still, mostly, in this type of work, *until you reach mutual respect, the work is often useless...* in this type of work, which is based on human and institutions as well, but still, *if we do not understand the others and give them space, it is waste of time.* Some people I have seen... I think their passports should be taken from them so that they could not leave their home country. *One person had exploded...* Another high official from another African country and ministry came to my room shocked about the explosion of the donor representative. He said that if that would have happened in his country [another African country] they would have asked this donor representative to leave. They would have told that one cannot behave in that way. Full stop. And that person stayed, maybe a little less than a year. They still talk about her/him in the Ministry... *that one should not swallow everything... s/he is quite smart... but such an emotional behaviour destroys so much, it spoils so incredibly much.* (B 2004)

There was also a very different opinion expressed by one European interviewee. S/he explained that s/he is sometimes considered rude, because s/he does not know the cultural codes or s/he has to speak up because s/he needs to be listened to. S/he admits that s/he is “culture blind” towards some of the issues in Zambia and people might think that s/he does not care about being sensitive towards the working culture in Zambia, although this is not what s/he means.

...I'm sure that they see that I'm often the youngest in the meeting... I'm sure they've seen that, and sometimes I've felt that if I've had my hand up, they [overlook] me. But then I just take the word. *Sometimes I'm probably considered rude, but I don't have time to sit and wait for...* I think I've stepped on a few toes. Not a lot, but a few times... I feel that they listen when I speak and so on. I don't see it. I know it is there, and I have seen that... I've probably seen a lot less than what is actually there, cos I'm somehow culture blind to some of the codes within a Zambian context. I cannot even grasp the unwritten laws, the gender values here... ...I'm sure I've called people with their first names and I should've said Mr... (E 2004)

The informants discussed the influence of earlier experiences on their perceptions. The media, the education system and the environment where we live affect our perceptions and meaning structures. It was outlined that stereotypes and prejudices might restrict us from experiencing reality.

Sometimes some *people, even when they have a lot of experience in Africa, their perceptions emanating from their culture, where they come from, the things they have heard or read about Africa...* ...how many times it took me to convince my British landlady, who kept me. Each time I told her that we have tarmac [roads], she couldn't just believe. She wanted to believe what she saw on television that there is... it [African continent] is undeveloped. So when I tell her that there are tarmac roads in Lusaka, she says what about all these things we see? So, some things are perceptions of individuals. ... [how to] open one's mind to other possibilities. *So, suspicions are rising from so many angles, but one of those definitely is culture...* (F 2004)

Even Zambians, some *people have been brought up to believe that anybody from Europe is trustworthy.* So, it's the way we are brought up. (F 2004)

I'll tell you a culture shock. The first time I went to UK, it was in 1997 and I was barely 27 years old, and that was the first time to be out of Zambia... We boarded a train from Gatwick to central London and all the way I could see people were slashing grass along the railway line ...white. For me and my colleagues it was a culture shock. Here white slash, slash grass, no, no. Because everybody who was white here [in Zambia] was well-off, so we didn't think a person at their home they would slash, but we found they were doing that. So it took us a week to settle down, to come down to reality. We thought that digging roads it was, they got people from Africa... So, that was our thinking that no, no, I can't believe my eyes. *So some people come already with that notion and sometimes it depends on your responsible situation, you can stay for a long time thinking that all of these issues...* (F 2004)

When encountering different hierarchy, for example in the local context, one has to reflect on how to behave in that specific situation according to one's position but also according to the responsibilities at work. Discussion might lead to mutual change in meaning perspectives if the partners are willing to begin the journey towards intercultural sensitivity.

An informant of European origin found it hard to work with the “culture of silence” in Zambia, as s/he was not used to that. S/he had been encouraged to express her/his own opinions since s/he was a small child.

*I come from a [name of the geographical area] background where, when you're a little kid, you're asked what do you feel, what do you need, what's your opinion?* What will you do about this? And here it's much more, they're much more reserved, afraid to speak their mind, if the supervisor or the minister or the PS [is present]... *They have huge respect for authorities here that at least we [name of the geographical area] don't have so much.* There's some, but not at the same level. So sometimes we perceive it as inertia, I think, come on! ...They feel they need to be authorised or requested to do ABC, whereas we put things that, but that's part of your part, and you can take a decision here. That is a big cultural difference in a way that I often forget. I have to remind myself about it. (E 2004)

A Zambian interviewee discussed the “culture of silence” at work in Zambia from her/his point of view.

We can have a meeting and you find that the only person who's talking. ...especially at the government sector it's there... ...People around the table won't speak, it becomes a very difficult meeting for example, because you have maybe ten other officers, officials, but maybe one or two [talk]... ...but why are they all they so silent? *It's not because they don't have an input to say, but because there's a hidden social, cultural, maybe, element, that's taking place there that one would have to understand and see how you address it and go along with it.* There's always something, but how do we get these meetings to be more effective and get more participation. People will always come, but the *minute [the boss arrives] we have this silence*, so you know, these are interesting factors. (A 2004)

Most of the informants considered that it is very crucial to recognise the hidden values and norms as they might either prevent or support progress at work. However, one Zambian interviewee had the opinion that people who come from outside to work in Zambia do not take enough time to understand the people, local Zambian culture and the work culture.

...one is to take time to understand it, because sometimes what I've noticed is that people come, they do not have enough time, they do

not take enough time to understand the people, the culture, the work culture. And to understand some of the factors that are going into making this, going towards this partnership. ***I think time should be spent understanding the local circumstances.*** (A 2004)

One of the hidden codes which the above informant described is power structure:

...just to say something about some of the [issues], what have been really hidden. ...sometimes ***some factors that affect the way people operate, sometimes it can be power, I mean a social power structure.*** Because initially, why do people fail to make decisions, everybody's been struggling with trying to delegate power to lower levels, but why hasn't it worked, why do at the provincial level, at the district level, why do they also shy away from decision-making, things like that. ***One needs to understand what are the real reasons, sometimes they can be hidden actually, hidden reasons for this.*** We've had, for example, situation of what you call, what's the word, not allegiance, but we've come from a culture where sometimes positions and jobs were given, sometimes not on merit, but other grounds.... people shy away from opposing and not taking decisions that are maybe, or would seem to be bold or contrary to the powers that be. (A 2004)

Many development cooperation workers stated that in order to work together it is important to encounter and understand each other. However, the respondents explained that inequality in the development cooperation structures is present at all times.

I talked about the fact that I've seen this develop all the time, yes, but I think more in terms of being able to recognize each person... the whole obligations of the different sides, and maybe being willing to accept that this is a process. ***You begin to understand each other, you begin to be able to talk to each other in a much freer way, but that doesn't mean that two sides are equal.*** This is what I'm trying to say. So these are some of the obstacles I think. (A 2004)

An attempt to advance one's own goals and not appreciating the views of the others, particularly the local point of view in negotiations, was regarded as a crucial obstacle for successful cooperation.

*Sometimes it can be a personal thing, because you have an agenda, you have your mission, and you're going to do it no matter what. So I think it's just lack of understanding the local context, lack of appreciating the fact that others have something at stake in it. So that sometimes can be something, which can be very characteristic of specific individuals. ...I think in the process you find that these people are also not able to appreciate the views or the positions or the situation of the other party, and willing to come to some terms, under which they could agree. (A 2004)*

When one comes to work in Zambia from the outside, it is considered very important to understand the local context and appreciate other's ways of life and points of view. Informants also emphasise that African countries are different – you cannot assume you know all the countries if you have lived in one.

*If we think about, for example, people coming from abroad as experts, technical advisors, donors or whatever... ...they need to understand the local context. That's very, very important. And you cannot compare something that happened in a country maybe where we worked before, I mean there are some circumstances that are very particular in Zambia... ...I think first and foremost, they should not be assuming that because you've had experiences [elsewhere] in Africa, for example, you have enough experience to come and work... (A 2004)*

Many informants also emphasized the ability to learn from situations, observe, be present and listen to different points of view. That ultimately develops abilities to analyse situations and others but particularly to reflect oneself, one's work and background

## Conclusions

The transition from projects to the sector-wide approach has, according to the interviewees, affected the ways of working and given new perspectives to the discussion about ownership and partnership. In many cases, the changes

have been rather slow, and both new and old systems and ways of working still co-exist. At the same time, Zambia is very dependent on external assistance, and global agendas have increased their influence in addition to the previous influence of donor agencies. In the midst of the various stakeholders, it is possible but demanding for the country to form and regulate its own policies and systematically follow them up. Changes in politics, leadership and staff can have radical effects on this. One danger is also that development cooperation can become a high-level policy discussion or the business of the elite, detached from the grassroots realities of the country or with very little professional knowledge of the substance areas of educational practice.

The informants pointed out that the education sector of Zambia has experienced a lot of short-term interventions, which mostly have had a positive effect as such, but have also made the education sector very fragmented. One can also question the sustainability of the many interventions and how well they have covered the overall development of the education sector. The informants also criticized the motives of some actors and the conflicting interests of various stakeholders in projects, all of whom may not have had the good of the local people as their primary goal. In the past, negotiations and discussions about the various projects have also burdened the ministries in Zambia, as the requirements of the individual donor agencies had to be catered for separately.

As a whole, the persons interviewed in our study considered ownership to be a useful concept in describing the aims of development cooperation, and described many changes which indicated that SWAp has increased the ownership of Zambian ministries. Some of the interviewees pointed out that, analysing the situation more carefully, the situation is complicated and one could see a dual ownership: of the Ministry of Education, on the one hand, and donor agencies, on the other. Besides, ownership might also vary according to the aspect of responsibility, and this should be specified in discussions instead of overall reference to ownership. On the other hand, the interviewed people were more sceptical about equal partnership as a realistic aim to be reached.

They named several reasons for the difficulty of overcoming the mutuality gap, such as differences in economic status and power of the parties.

SWAp has, according to the interviews, improved the negotiation practices in many ways and has increased the ownership of the Zambian Ministry of Education. As the large number of donor agencies often makes it impossible for all of them to be present in the meetings and make themselves heard, means have also been developed for more democratic representation of the agencies in the negotiations. It is usual to choose a small number of representatives who prepare the negotiation documents together with all the participating donors. In the preparation process the Ministry of Education can comment on the suggestions before the final negotiation meetings and agreements. There are drawbacks in this process, too, and means to overcome them need to be discussed.

Generally speaking, it is a positive development that the Zambian Ministry of Education has more ownership in the sector program than the foreign actors. However, the end results in the sector are then increasingly dependent on the expertise, competences and determination of the staff in the Ministry. The professionals interviewed for this study were asking about the ownership of education sector staff at provincial, local and school levels. They were also deliberating the roles of generalists and specialists in decision-making situations and in day-to-day operation of the education sector. It was argued that sometimes the expertise of the involved professionals was considerable in the projects that focused on a particular field and very often the overseas professionals worked closely with the grass-root activities of the host countries. In contrast, the donor representatives negotiating with the ministries may not possess sufficient knowledge of the country and the needs of people to make informed decisions about educational issues. The interviewees pointed out that in the projects, staff could be highly competent experts of the particular area, and they could know the local context and the needs of the people – especially if they had spent a longer period of time in the country. The funding would be clearly targeted and would go directly for the benefit of a particular sector and area. Some of the interviewed people were worried about the future of such



sub-sectors or issues (e.g. special and inclusive education) which may not be popular and which does not seem to be among the dominant concerns in the policies of the ministries.

As stated before, the term “authentic partnership” is considered problematic when describing development cooperation, which has historically been very asymmetric by nature. But while there are many obstacles and gaps that perhaps cannot be totally overcome, the process towards more equal cooperation is an aim and ethical principle that must not be relinquished. One should be aware of the many existing constraints, historical, structural, institutional and individual, and should make attempts to abolish them. People have constructed institutions and social structures; so they should be able to deconstruct and rebuild them, too. The interviewees mostly focused on discussing the micro-level partnerships although many were conscious of meso- and macro-level factors as well.

When analysing the sector-wide approach, the informants talked about three kinds of partnerships: 1) among different donors, 2) between the team representing the donor agencies as a group and the Ministry of Education, and 3) bilaterally between the Ministry of Education and each donor. The third level is gradually becoming less dominant as sectoral and general budget support are strengthened, although the role of separate projects, in spite of their weaknesses, will not totally disappear in the near future. The ongoing harmonisation process in Zambia is an attempt to look at matters from the perspective of the host country and to agree on the division of labour among donors and agencies. This has challenged the traditional roles of donors and the Ministry, and new forms of cooperation need to be developed. It has increased the cooperation between the donors, although there are complaints about the smaller donors being overrun and about their difficulties of getting heard. Several interviewees emphasised the danger of discussions focusing too much on the processes, budgeting and administrative matters and too little attention being given to education itself and its various aspects and qualities.

The development cooperation workers emphasised that in all forms of cooperation, people and individuals are working with each other in an

international working environment, and the challenges of intercultural cooperation are present in all the activities. They pointed out that at the micro level, different personalities are working together in multicultural contexts. They were concerned about short-term contracts stating that when there is a constant replacement of people, the dynamics of the work place and working conditions also change. They strongly supported the significance of attitudes, skills, competences and sensitivity of the individuals working in development cooperation tasks. They referred to the importance of knowing the cultural and societal context of the country, the institutional culture and institutional roles and practices. Even more than knowledge, they emphasised attitudes and sensitivity. They argued that respect is perhaps the most important condition for equal partnerships and for successful long-term cooperation.

The informants discussed the ability to view things from various perspectives, to look at oneself from the other's point of view, and to understand the various levels of cultural encounters and institutional encounters that are involved in the development cooperation negotiations and work practices. The cooperation workers need to learn to listen and have a dialogue and the ability to read cultural codes. In order to create opportunities for learning, longer-term contracts are beneficial. In addition, support for intercultural learning is essential. The context of development cooperation provides good opportunities for intercultural learning and professional development. These learning opportunities should be utilized in different modes of training organised by Zambian and European colleagues. Both orientation type of training and systematic professional guidance and counseling are needed in order to support the development co-operation workers' intercultural learning and process towards intercultural sensitivity.

One of the starting points in this article has been ethics, and particularly human rights and equity as an ethical principle. The ideals of partnership and ownership of the host country have ethical implications, and they reflect the values which have been considered important in development cooperation activities. Both concepts refer to equity as one of the ultimate aims of the cooperation relations. One can of course adopt a cynical point of view and

just state that partnership and ownership of the host country simply are not possible in development cooperation relations. The historical legacies are so powerful and the mutuality gap so vast that, realistically, we had better stop talking about these aims. Such statements are understandable, and perhaps partnership and ownership are not even the best terms to describe the aspirations. However, if we believe that the equal value of human beings, non-violence and equity are cornerstones of global ethics as well as of sustainable development, we cannot forsake the search for the ethical guidelines and ideals in human relations, cooperation and international politics.

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## CONCLUSIONS

### Main findings of the research project

This chapter aims at synthesizing the main findings of the research project. It is not a comprehensive summary of the findings of the three studies reported in this book – such summaries are found at the end of each of the main chapters.

The principal finding from the study conducted by Packalen is that the role of parliaments in the making and monitoring of educational policies in countries of the South is a conspicuously neglected issue in the sector program context. This reflects the dominance of technocratic rationality in the preparation of education sector programs, allowing little room for political discussion on program objectives and the means of pursuing them. In view of the often significant influence of politics in the education policy arena in countries of the North, one could characterize the sector-wide approach as a requirement that the aid-dependent developing countries become more technocratically-driven than the donor countries themselves are. But as Packalen also shows for the case of Tanzania, the influence of the externally defined technocratic agenda has its limits, notably in the decision-making concerning the government budget, and further in the actual allocation of government expenditure.

In contrast with the marginal role accorded to parliaments, “consultation with civil society” has become a central feature of ESDP preparations. As reported in the article by Takala and Doftori, in both Nepal and Tanzania consultation with selected NGOs has contributed to that, over time, these countries’ education sector programs have given increasing attention to education of disadvantaged population groups. At the same time, there has been little discussion of how the role of NGOs in the preparation and

implementation of ESDPs should be linked to institutions of representative democratic participation. The views of both Government and NGO representatives in Nepal and Tanzania exhibit a considerable degree of mutual suspicion. A common view expressed by government officials is that NGOs are not accountable to any constituency, or alternatively are pursuing agendas defined by their external funding agencies. On their part, NGOs justify their existence by the claim that Government is not attentive to the needs of the citizenry, particularly of the disadvantaged population groups, and that corruption is prevalent in government structures.

A subsequent complicated question then is, how – if at all – can direct financial support from external funding agencies to Southern NGOs be justified, against the alternative that the status of NGOs be redefined as implementers of designated parts of the ESDP that receive their funding through the sector program channels? At a time when bi- and multilaterally funded projects with governments of developing countries are gradually being phased out, direct external funding to NGOs operating in policy advocacy and social mobilisation (with or without using the term “watchdogs”) can easily be construed as an indication of mistrust towards the partner government’s commitment to poverty reduction and to building institutions of representative democracy. An alternative view is that donor agencies have a constructive mediating and capacity-building role to play in creating a healthy relationship between government and NGOs.

While the contributions of Packalen and Takala & Doftori focus on structural and institutional issues of SWAp, the findings reported by Alasuutari and Räsänen demonstrate how the conceptually vague notions of partnership and ownership are interpreted by stakeholders who work in the sector program context in Zambia. In congruence with the findings from Nepal and Tanzania, also the Zambian informants express an overall positive view of developments that have taken place during the SWAp era. But many of them also point out barriers that continue to exist at the level of intercultural communication and learning. Another important finding from this study is that, at the level of person-to-person interaction, some projects in the past



clearly have been valuable in building a cross-culturally shared understanding of the substance of educational development, which is at risk of being lost in the sector program context.

## Practical implications

A widespread approach in the promotion of democracy as part of development cooperation has been support to various democracy projects and programs. The possibilities of such separate efforts, however, are very limited if the wider environment of sector program support is actually an obstacle to the development of democracy, by undermining the role of parliaments. Respect for local political processes and democratically elected bodies should be genuinely mainstreamed in all development cooperation, including the principles and practices of sector program support. At the same time, donor agencies need to clarify their positions concerning possible support to Southern NGOs as a means to contribute to building of civil society, in dialogue with both the partner governments and NGOs in the South. To remain viable partners in the sector program context, NGOs also need to clarify their orientation and improve their capacities for analysis, planning and negotiation. We can expect that part of the existing NGOs will survive in the landscape of sector programs, with a renewed agenda and a changed mode of operation, whereas others will not find a meaningful role and will fade away.

In the SWAp, there is necessarily a tradeoff between giving more focus on the macro-level issues and relying more on short-term than long-term technical assistance (TA) on the one hand, and having less long-term contact of expatriate TA personnel with local professionals and stakeholders in sector-specific issues of substance, on the other. While the latter may be seen as a loss, it should be remembered that in the project mode of development cooperation, TA was typically regarded as a (non-negotiable) part of a support package, where the TA personnel were primarily accountable to the donor agencies/their sub-contractors. Especially the senior technical advisors working in

projects often had a control function and related management tasks as a major part of their responsibilities, whereas within SWAp, technical advisors work either in the structures of the Ministry or are part of the staff of the different embassies, with correspondingly different professional loyalties and networks. The prospect opened up by sector program support is that governments (and NGOs) of developing countries could themselves decide on the amount and kind of TA they deem appropriate and recruit such TA personnel.

One obvious practical conclusion that follows from the findings of Alasuutari and Räsänen is that individually variable capacity for intercultural communication and learning could be given increased weight as a selection criterion in recruitment of staff (both Northern and Southern) into development cooperation tasks. A related challenge is to develop means to build such capacity through various modes of training.

## Issues for further research

The findings of our research project point at some issues for further research that would be very relevant for a more thorough understanding of the socio-political and cultural context in which sector programs are prepared and implemented:

- 1) Analysis of the views of stakeholders on the role of the institutions of representative political democracy in the sector program context. This would entail interviewing politically elected persons in executive positions of government, party leaders and members of parliaments, government officials in technocratic positions, NGO leaders and representatives of donor agencies. The ongoing study of Packalen is proceeding in this direction.
- 2) Comparative analysis of how the issues that emerge on the global agenda of educational development (e.g. decentralization, HIV/AIDS) are dealt with at the national level in developing countries, and to what extent, as a result, the definitions of these issues on the global agenda are adopted,

modified or ignored in national policy-making. Such a study could be carried out as an analysis of documents, possibly complemented by interviews of key informants.

- 3) Prevalence and forms of corruption in the education sector, in both Government structures and among NGOs, as perceived by Government officials, NGO activists, ordinary citizens and expatriate professionals working in the sector. A pioneering research project on this sensitive issue has been already carried out by the International Institute for Educational Planning (see Hallak, J. & Poisson, M.: *Corrupt Schools, Corrupt Universities: What Can Be Done?* Paris: IIEP 2007).
- 4) Consequences for intercultural dialogue and learning from the changing role of Technical Assistance in the transition from the project mode to sector program support. This issue includes questions such as to what extent is development cooperation seen as a career vs. a field of sporadic and unpredictable short-term consultancy assignments, and what are the professional loyalties and networks of the TA personnel. Such a study would entail interviews with development cooperation professionals from both the North and the South, as well as with other stakeholders in the education sector of developing countries who come to encounter TA personnel.

